

National Sustainability Summit
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Last week I had the opportunity to attend the National Sustainability Summit and National Energy Extension Summit in Tampa, Florida. It was a week packed with innovation, research, and on-farm tours. The tour I attended focused on hops, solar, and locally-sourced, sustainable breweries. The theme for all of the conference sessions and programs were related to sustainability and energy.

The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF IFAS) Gulf Coast Research and Education Center (GCREC) is conducting research on growing hops in the Florida climate. UF researchers have found that Florida is the only place where hops can be harvested twice a year, with harvests in June and November. The drawback of the Floridian climate and two harvests means there is a lower yield in comparison to an ideal climate. The ideal hops growing region is between 40 degrees and 50 degrees latitude, which is roughly mid-Ohio and Michigan.

While Florida isn't in the perfect climate location for hops, researchers are utilizing LED lights to extend the number of hours of light exposure. Hops produced at the UF IFAS GCREC facility are used at local breweries in the Tampa Bay region.

The Tampa Electric Company (TECO) is investing in multiple solar farm locations. I toured TECO's Balm Solar facility, which is a 74.4 MW facility encompassing 541 acres. This facility uses 719,640 modules and 27 inverters. In order to minimize the number of times the grass needs to be mowed; sheep are used to graze the solar farm in rotations.

Utilizing both the hops from UF IFAS GCREC and TECO's solar-powered electric, Coppertail Brewing Company produces a variety of beverages from all-Florida sourced ingredients. Established in 2014, Coppertail Brewing Company utilizes the most technologically advanced brewing equipment available. They have changed their packaging to solely using recyclable, aluminum cans, of which they can fill 250 a minute. As the company uses only Florida-sourced ingredients, they also market their products only in Florida.

In addition to learning about Florida sustainability efforts, I learned about a variety of innovations and projects being conducted across the United States. I presented at the National Sustainability Conference on the virtual reality (VR) programs that the OSU Extension Office has hosted in Highland County, the future of VR technology for field trips, and the upcoming Germinate International Film Fest. For more information about any of the upcoming Highland County Extension programs, contact the office at 937-393-1918.

Upcoming Programs:

Tuesday, April 30, 2019, a live-broadcast forage webinar with Christine Gelley, ANR Extension Educator from Noble County, will be held at 5 P.M. in the Large Meeting Room in the basement of 119 Governor Foraker Place, Hillsboro, OH. Gelley will discuss a variety of forage-related topics to help you prepare for the 2019 growing season and upcoming winter. This program is free to attend, but RSVPs are encouraged to reserve your seat by calling 937-393-1918.

A Hands-on filmmaking workshop will be held on Tuesday, May 21, 2019, at 3 P.M. at the Lynchburg Library. Bring your own camera and tripod for this walking filmmaking workshop. RSVP to the OSU Extension Office at 937-393-1918.

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A Video Editing Workshop will be held on Tuesday, May 28, 2019, at 3 P.M. at the Lynchburg Library. This workshop will teach basic editing principles on both laptops and mobile devices. Bring your own computer or mobile device to participate. RSVP to the OSU Extension Office at 937-393-1918.

The Germinate International Film Fest will be accepting submissions through June 30, 2019. The festival will be held on August 16 & 17, 2019, in Hillsboro, Ohio. For more information or to apply, visit <https://filmfreeway.com/GerminateInternationalFilmFest>. Contact Brooke Beam at the OSU Extension Office for more information at 937-393-1918.