National Forum on Nature-based Solutions

March 10-12, 2026 in Mobile, AL

Speaker Biographies

Nasrin Alamdari

Assistant Professor, FAMU-FSU College of Engineering

Nasrin Alamdari is an Assistant Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering. She holds a Ph.D. in Biological Systems Engineering from Virginia Tech and completed postdoctoral research at the Colorado School of Mines. Her research focuses on watershed hydrology, stormwater management, harmful algal bloom prediction, and nature-based solutions, with particular emphasis on applying AI and data-driven methods to water resources challenges. Her goals include developing accessible decision-support tools that help communities integrate green infrastructure into urban planning, advancing equitable stormwater management practices, and bridging the gap between academic ecosystem service research and practical infrastructure investment decisions.

Safra Altman

Senior Research Ecologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Dr. Safra Altman is a senior research ecologist at the Army Engineer Research & Development Center's Environmental Laboratory and serves as the lead for ERDC's Coastal Ecology team. The team uses creative scientific approaches and quantitative methods to develop tools for environmental restoration, environmentally sound dredging practices and use of dredged material, dune management, and management of threatened and endangered species. Dr. Altman has helped to develop landscape ecology models that incorporate habitat changes, landscape level changes and changes in ecological processes in barrier islands and has been involved in an international EWN initiatives to develop engineering guidelines for Natural and Nature Based Features such as submerged aquatic vegetation, oyster and coral reefs, and coastal upland plant communities. Dr. Altman has experience with monitoring and adaptive management of coastal restoration and natural infrastructure projects and serves as a subject matter expert to support USACE Headquarters on coral reef ecology. Dr. Altman and the Coastal Team conduct research to support civil and military needs in planning, regulatory, operations and maintenance and construction and design. She holds a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolution from University of Maryland and an M.S. in Oceanography from University of Connecticut.

Christine Angelini

Vice President, AECOM

Christine serves as a Vice President within AECOM Advisory where she leads strategy and growth within the Nature Services market. In this role, Christine assembles and leads interdisciplinary teams to innovate solutions that sustain critical ecological functions while addressing infrastructure and operational imperatives for her government, NGO and private clients. A marine ecologist by training, Christine specializes in coastal habitat restoration design and mitigating watershed impacts on estuarine water quality. Prior to joining AECOM, Christine was the founder and executive director for the Center for Coastal Solutions and the Scott and Barbie Pressly Rising Star professor in Environmental Engineering Sciences at the University of Florida where she was on faculty for over a decade. Christine has authored over 100 peer-reviewed articles, including publications in Science, Nature and PNAS, and maintains a vibrant network of global collaborations focused on advancing science-based, stakeholder-driven environmental management.

Steven Bailey

Landscape Architect, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Steven Bailey is a landscape Architect with the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center's Coastal and Hydraulics Laboratory and serves as a Strategic Integration Coordinator for the Engineering With Nature® (EWN®) program. His work spans conceptual design, visualization, applied research, and strategic communication, supporting collaboration across the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of War, academia, and industry partners. He advances the research, development, and implementation of natural and hybrid infrastructure within military and civil works portfolios through the study of landscape systems across diverse scales, environments, and operational contexts.

Savanna Barry

Regional Specialized Extension Agent, University of Florida and Florida Sea Grant

Dr. Savanna Barry serves as a Regional Specialized Extension Agent III with UF/IFAS Extension and Florida Sea Grant. She is based at the UF/IFAS Nature Coast Biological Station in Cedar Key, Florida. Savanna grew up on a small farm in central Virginia and discovered her interest in marine ecology during family vacations to small fishing towns along the Chesapeake Bay. She holds a B.S. in Biology from the University of Virginia, and a M.S. and Ph.D. in Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences from the University of Florida. Her work focuses on the intersection of environmental management and applied research and supporting community-driven coastal science.

Michael W. Beck

Director of Center for Coastal Resilience, UC Santa Cruz

Michael W. Beck is the Director of the Center for Coastal Climate Resilience & AXA Chair in Coastal Resilience at the University of California Santa Cruz. He was Lead Marine Scientist at The Nature Conservancy for 20 years. He collaborates with many agencies and companies including the World Bank, US Army Corp, FEMA, AXA and many re-insurance firms. He has authored more than 100 papers and numerous op-eds in major papers, including the LA Times and NY Times. He has been a Fulbright Fellow and a Pew Marine Fellow.

Joe Berg

Senior Restoration Ecologist & Practice Leader, Biohabitats, Inc.

Joe is an ecosystems ecologist and Practice Lead at Biohabitats. He has focused on natural resource assessment and restoration for more than 40 years, all as a consultant in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

Jo Bonner

President, University of South Alabama

Jo Bonner is the fourth president of the University of South Alabama, where he leads efforts to position the institution as a flagship university on the Gulf Coast and expand its academic and health system impact. Previously he served as chief of staff to Alabama Governor Kay Ivey and as vice chancellor for economic development for the University of Alabama System, and before that he represented Alabama's First Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives for six terms, where he served on the Appropriations Committee and chaired the House Ethics Committee. A native of Selma, Alabama, he earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Alabama and began his career on Capitol Hill as press secretary and later chief of staff to Congressman Sonny Callahan. Bonner's service has been recognized with honors including induction into the Alabama Academy of Honor and the Distinguished Public Service Award from the U.S. Navy, and he remains engaged with regional education and civic initiatives.

Nicholas Bourdon

Co-Founder, Reef Arches

Nicholas Bourdon is the Co-Founder of Reef Arches, a large-scale patented coastal protection system designed for living shorelines, breakwaters, and barrier reefs. It is the only product on the market with a flow-through design that has been successful in restoring sediment behind and through its technology. Nick was recently recognized under Forbes 30 Under 30 this year for his work in climate-tech. Reef Arches also produces novel seawall tiles to build reefs across any seawall. Today, Reef Arches is actively looking to license its technology & grow partnerships across the US & Caribbean.

Amy Bredes

Coastal Engineer, Baird & Associates

Dr. Amy Bredes specializes in coastal engineering, ecology, sediment management, and environmental chemistry. Dr. Bredes has over 8 years' experience in industry, academia, and government with a focus on nature-based solution engineering, habitat restoration, sediment management and disposal, and environmental construction. She has co-authored multiple guidelines on nature-based solution and living shoreline implementation.

Todd Bridges

Associate Director, Institute for Resilient Infrastructure Systems, University of Georgia

Dr. Todd Bridges is a Professor of Practice in Resilient and Sustainable Systems in the College of Engineering at the University of Georgia. Prior to joining UGA in 2023, Dr. Bridges was a research scientist for 30 years with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), where for 17 years he served as the Army's Senior Research Scientist (ST) for Environmental Science. He's led >$250 million in research projects and programs. In 2010, he founded and then led the USACE Engineering With Nature® program. Among his 100 publications, Bridges led a 5-year collaboration across the public and private sectors to develop and publish International Guidelines on Natural and Nature-Based Features for Flood Risk Management. Dr. Bridges has received many awards, including a Distinguished Presidential Rank Award from President Biden in 2021 for exceptional leadership, accomplishments, and service.

Talley Burley

Senior Manager of Climate Risk & Insurance, Environmental Defense Fund

Talley Burley is the Senior Manager, Climate Risk & Insurance at Environmental Defense Fund. Through her experience at the intersection of disaster, housing, and financial resilience policy she leads initiatives and supports research around insurance and insurability to drive more sustainable and resilient outcomes in a changing climate. Prior to joining she worked for NYC government working for the Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) and the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations (HRO) leading housing resilience and financial resilience policy and program development, including efforts to drive retrofits and investments for small residential housing stock and programs to access and awareness of flood insurance. She holds a B.A. in Political Science from American University and a Master's in Urban Planning from New York University.

Matt Chambers

Assistant Research Scientist, University of Georgia

Dr. Matt Chambers is an assistant research scientist with the Institute for Resilient Infrastructure Systems at the University of Georgia. Matt's research in resilient infrastructure systems is strongly applied with an emphasis on the science and practice of river restoration for flood risk management. His research also includes computational methods for assessing the resilience of stormwater management systems, assessing the hydrodynamic and geomorphic response of dam retrofits, and experimental assessments of stream restoration practices in upland and montane river networks. He holds engineering degrees from Georgia Institute of Technology and Stanford University, and a PhD from the University of Georgia.

Glen Delaney

Project Director, Earth Economics

Glen Delaney is a project director and director of partnerships at Earth Economics, a non-profit with a mission to quantify and value nature for better decision-making. He has led valuations of diverse ecosystems from salmon habitat restoration in Washington to the Greater Everglades. Previously, Glen was a British commercial officer in San Francisco, supporting the UK's climate agenda during COP26.

Grace Edinger

Conservation Finance Policy Lead, Environmental Policy Innovation Center

Grace joined the Environmental Policy Innovation Center in 2022 and now serves as the Conservation Finance Policy Lead. Prior to working at EPIC, Grace acted as Chief Program Officer at the national nonprofit Earth Force, which engages people in environmental policy development. In addition, she has served in advisory roles for multiple environmental coalitions and is a County Commissioner for her local Parks & Recreation department. Her experience in public service, ecosystem research, and data communication culminates in her work at EPIC, where she researches, designs, and advocates for financing and alternative procurement for restoration and public health outcomes. Grace holds a Bachelor's degree in Zoology, specializing in Ecology, Evolution, and Organismal Biology from Michigan State University, as well as a Master's in Biology, specializing in ecosystem health from the University of Alabama.

Dan Favre

Director of Environmental Programs, Greater New Orleans Foundation

Dan serves as Director of Environmental Programs at the Greater New Orleans Foundation, where he leads initiatives that advance climate adaptation and mitigation across the region. His work includes reducing flood risk through innovative green infrastructure, strengthening community engagement in coastal restoration and protection, and expanding efforts to support more sustainable and accessible transportation systems. Since joining the Foundation in 2022, he has focused on aligning philanthropic investment, partnerships, and on the ground action to drive measurable environmental and community outcomes. Previously, Dan served as Executive Director of Bike Easy, the region's bicycle education and advocacy organization, and earlier held roles as Campaign Organizer and Communications Director at Healthy Gulf, where he worked on clean water, coastal restoration, fisheries, and climate advocacy. He serves on the boards of Blue Krewe, which manages the Blue Bikes bike share system, and City Thread, a national nonprofit accelerating mobility and place based projects. Dan brings broad experience in nonprofit leadership, including grassroots organizing, strategic planning, staff and volunteer management, policy advocacy, fundraising, coalition building, financial oversight, and partnership development across public, private, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors.

Alissa Farina

Assistant Chief Resilience Officer, City of Miami

Alissa Farina is the Assistant Chief Resilience Officer for City of Miami. After graduating from University of Miami in 2014 with Bachelors of Arts in Ecosystem Science & Policy and Economics, she helped upstart two environmental education programs, the Inventors-in-Residence Program at Frost Science and the Miami Science Barge. In 2017, she transitioned to working for City of Miami's Office of Resilience and Sustainability helping develop the regional urban resilience strategy, Resilient305, the City's climate adaptation plan, Miami Forever Climate Ready, and the City's greenhouse gas reduction plan, Miami Forever Carbon Neutral. Currently Alissa is focused on continuing to operationalize resilience across the City, creating frameworks for monitoring and evaluation, and mobilizing implementation of resilience strategies.

Melissa Forbes

Deputy Executive Director, Gulf Research Program, NAS

Melissa Forbes is Deputy Executive Director of the Gulf Research Program at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, where she helps shape and implement the program's strategic vision to develop, translate, and apply science that strengthens coastal community resilience, offshore energy safety, and environmental health across the Gulf region. Prior to joining the Gulf Research Program, she held senior leadership roles in federal disaster policy and resilience strategy, including serving in executive positions at the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency, where she oversaw large scale recovery operations and policy planning informed by rigorous analysis and cross-sector engagement. Dr. Forbes holds a

doctorate in Public Policy and Sociology, grounding her work in interdisciplinary research and evidence-based program design that advances science to action for long-term regional and national benefit.

Kara Fox

Director, Coastal Conservation, National Audubon Society

Kara Fox is an ecologist and restoration leader with more than 20 years of experience in science-based coastal conservation. She joined Audubon in 2017 and serves as Director of Coastal Conservation, guiding restoration across coastal programs to ensure efforts are comprehensive, community supported, and grounded in strong science. She strengthens collaboration across teams and advances climate resilient bird conservation, including leading Audubon's work on offshore wind in the Gulf region to align renewable energy development with conservation and coastal resilience goals. Previously, Kara led marine restoration initiatives at Ocean Conservancy and served as a natural resource planner for Baldwin County, Alabama, where she helped implement the county's response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and managed its Coastal Impact Assistance Program. Earlier, she coordinated restoration and community engagement projects for the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program. She holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of South Alabama.

Rachel Gittman

Associate Professor, East Carolina University

Dr. Gittman is an Associate Professor in the Department of Biology and Coastal Studies Institute at East Carolina University. Her research focal areas include marine community ecology, restoration ecology, coastal management and policy, and sustainability science. She received her doctorate in Ecology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2014 and was a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Northeastern University from 2015-2017. Before attending graduate school, Dr. Gittman was an environmental consultant in Washington D.C. for three years after graduating from the University of Virginia in 2006 with a B.S. in Environmental Sciences with High Distinction.

Elizabeth S. Godsey

Coastal and Regional Sediment Management Engineering Technical Lead, U.S. Army Corps of Engineering

Elizabeth S. Godsey, P.E. is an Engineering with Nature Practice Lead for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. She has over 24 years of experience implementing coastal storm risk management, ecosystem restoration, and navigation projects. She supports multidisciplinary teams in solving complex water resource related challenges and delivering solutions along the Gulf Coast and the nation. Elizabeth specializes in integrating nature-based solutions into infrastructure planning and design through regional sediment management, beneficial use of dredge material and adaptive management frameworks. She has authored more then 22 technical publications and received over 17 professional awards, including the USACE Hydrology, Hydraulics and Coastal Professional of the Year Award. Her work advances practical implementation of nature-based solutions at project and regional scales, bridging engineering performance, ecological functions, and long-term system resilience.

Meg Goecker

Vice President, Moffatt & Nichol

Meg Goecker has 24 years of project management experience, having spent the last 10 years managing some of the largest coastal restoration projects on the Gulf Coast. She has been engrained in the restoration assessment, planning, and implementation of Deepwater Horizon oil spill projects from the start, having worked with NOAA Restoration Center, and now in the private industry. As a project manager and client manager, she has supported NGOs, state, and federal agencies bringing habitat restoration science to fruition across the Gulf Coast. These projects

have been successful due to her strong background in marine and coastal ecology, ensuring that engineers design projects that will increase productivity whilst protecting the Gulf Coast shorelines.

Judy Haner

Coastal Programs Director, The Nature Conservancy

Judy Haner has served as Coastal Programs Director for The Nature Conservancy in Alabama for more than 16 years, overseeing marine restoration, coastal ecology, and regional conservation while connecting communities with resources to advance long term restoration. She earned a dual major in biology and chemistry from Lynchburg College and a master's degree in Marine Science from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science at the College of William and Mary, and she serves on advisory committees for the Mississippi Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, the East Gulf Coast Plain Joint Venture, and the Peninsula of Mobile, and as Affiliated Research Faculty with the University of South Alabama. Over a 35 year career that has included coordinating Everglades restoration and managing the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Alaska, she has focused on linking watershed processes with estuarine health, secured more than 96 million dollars in competitive grants, and led collaborative projects such as the Lightning Point and Lower Perdido Islands restorations that unite science, management, and community partners.

Jessica Henson

Partner, OLIN

Jessica is a Partner at OLIN where she leads the Los Angeles Studio and directs planning and design projects that seek to create socially and environmentally resilient infrastructure including the Los Angeles County LA River Master Plan and the Sepulveda Basin Vision Plan. Her other significant projects include the reimagination of the Truman Presidential Library and Museum Grounds, the Colburn School of Dance, Chicago's Willis Tower Roof Park, the new U.S. Embassies in London and Brasilia, the O'Hare Global Terminal, and the SELA Cultural Center. Jessica's work explores the relationships between hydrological, cultural, and social contexts. Specifically, she explores how landscape architects can create anticipatory design solutions that create more equitable communities in both urban and rural settings and respond to issues relating to flooding and water resources. In her design, teaching, and research she seeks to broaden the scope of the profession by thinking holistically about the places we live, why we live there, and the environmental, economic, and social effects of our settlement patterns. She leads the OLIN Labs @Scale project and is the author of "Wet + Dry: Rethinking the Mississippi River Cross-Section," a study on Upper Mississippi communities exploring the relationships between income, topography, and flooding along the river.

Patrick Hickey

Sr. Restoration Ecologist, CERP, Jacobs Engineering

Pat Hickey is a restoration ecologist, team leader, and national subject matter expert with more than 25 years of experience in road ecology, ecological mitigation, and environmental permitting. He received bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies from Richard Stockton University and a Master's degree in Natural Resource Management from University of Denver. He began in the Mid-Atlantic, but has spent the majority of his career in Colorado and the Mountain West. Throughout his career in the public and private sectors, he has worked to advance the use of nature based solutions for project impact minimization and site restoration, including the development of innovative project details and specifications to address project specific restoration problems. Pat's experience with wetland and riparian restoration includes multiple large-scale mitigation site designs, project plan details and specifications development, and site construction supervision. This work includes a USACE approved mitigation bank, USFWS approved critical habitat restoration, and multiple agency specific mitigation banks. With Jacobs, he is considered a national subject matter expert for wetland related technical issues, and currently focused on ecological connectivity including animal-vehicle conflict mitigation in Colorado, Alaska, and Virgina.

Carter Ingram

Managing Director, Pollination Group

Carter's career has centered on ecosystem conservation in partnership with businesses, communities, and governments across Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and the United States, and at Pollination she supports organizations in conducting nature related risk and opportunity assessments aligned with TNFD and integrating natural capital into corporate strategy, finance, investments, and products. Previously a Senior Manager at EY advising Fortune 500 companies on sustainability and nature strategies, she also led the Ecosystem Services program and the Science for Nature and People Partnership at the Wildlife Conservation Society, advancing the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services into economic development and poverty reduction. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Columbia University's Earth Institute and earned an M.Sc. and D.Phil. from Oxford University focused on biodiversity and ecosystem responses to stressors, has co edited two books and authored more than 60 publications, led major natural capital measurement initiatives in the United States and Rwanda, contributed to global efforts to quantify ecosystem benefits such as storm risk reduction and water regulation, and serves in advisory and leadership roles including the Terra Alpha Investment Advisory Board, Conservation Strategy Fund Board, the UNDP Equator Initiative Technical Advisory Committee, and as a lead author for the IPBES Business and Biodiversity Assessment, in addition to prior service on the HQ Capital Deep Impact Fund ESG expert group and as an Adjunct Associate Professor at Georgetown University.

Devyani Kar

Principal Resilience Scientist, Jacobs

Principal Resilience Scientist with deep expertise in watershed resilience, water resources management, adaptation planning, and emergency management. Proven track record in cross-sector collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and translating complex science into actionable decisions. Lead on resilience strategies for major infrastructure projects, securing multimillion-dollar funding, and collaborating between multiple levels of government and NGOs. Building global partnerships with research institutions and think-tanks to advance climate initiatives. Proponent of using climate finance models for public/private partnerships and champion of nature-based solutions for sustainable infrastructure.

Megan Kelso

Science Fellow, UC Santa Cruz

Megan is a conservation scientist and consultant for nature-based solutions and insurance. Her background is in coastal wetland ecology and the human wellbeing impacts of conservation and development projects. She enjoys working collaboratively across the environment, health, and development sectors to produce research that informs effective conservation and improves the wellbeing of local communities. Megan is a Science Fellow at UC Santa Cruz, where she co-designed a workforce training effort on coastal resilience and fosters collaborations with the insurance industry to envision ways to better integrate nature into risk models, insurance coverages, and financial tools. Previously, Megan was a NatureNet Science Fellow at UCLA and The Nature Conservancy, studying the effectiveness of integrated conservation and development approaches. She did her PhD at University of California, Davis, where she studied tradeoffs and synergies between wetland management goals such as carbon storage, invasive plant eradication, and mitigation of nutrient pollution in California salt marshes. Before graduate school, she led community-based wetland restoration projects in San Francisco Bay and Point Reyes National Seashore.

Jason Kudulis

Director, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program

As Director of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, Jason Kudulis leads a management conference of more than 300 community leaders to advance restoration, capacity building, and policy initiatives that protect and improve Alabama's coastal resources. He oversees implementation of projects that strengthen community resilience, improve water quality, and promote nature based solutions. A Mobile native, Jason developed an early appreciation for the region's ecological diversity that shaped his commitment to environmental stewardship. He holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of South Alabama and a Master of Science from the University of Alabama. His career includes public service with the National Park Service in several of the nation's most recognized landscapes, as well as roles with the states of Alabama and Utah and in the nonprofit sector.

Douglas Mason

Infrastructure Specialist

Doug works at the intersection of built and natural infrastructure to benefit communities and ecosystems. Previously the lead for nature-based solutions at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, he now serves as Director of Environmental and Social Performance at the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a U.S. development agency working in low-income countries worldwide. He has guided the development of $40 billion in infrastructure investment.

Sara Mason

Senior Policy Researcher, Duke University

Sara Mason is a Senior Policy Researcher at the Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment & Sustainability. Her work centers on incorporating ecosystem services into natural resource management decisions, nature-based solutions (NBS) policy and finance, environmental markets, climate resilience policy, and sustainable infrastructure. Sara is the coordinator of the National Ecosystem Services Partnership, an information and knowledge exchange hub for policy work and research on ecosystem services and NBS. She is one of the authors of the Nature-based Solutions Roadmap—a comprehensive resource developed in a collaboration between Duke University and the Department of the Interior to support NBS implementation.

Will McDow

Associate Vice President, Climate Resilient Coasts and Watersheds, Environmental Defense Fund

Will McDow is the Associate Vice President for EDF's Climate Resilient Coasts and Watersheds strategic initiative. In this work, Will engages communities, businesses, farmers, and public agencies to develop shared and equitable flood resilience solutions. Will has broad expertise in environmental market design, nature-based solutions, resilience policy and working lands conservation. Since joining EDF in 2003, he has focused on market-based incentives, state tax policy, farm bill programs, bioenergy markets and habitat exchanges.

Kyle McKay

Ecological Engineer, Woolpert

Dr. Kyle McKay is an ecological engineer and Woolpert's Environmental Director, who leads technical activities on environmental projects across Woolpert's portfolio. He blends expertise from hydraulic and hydrologic engineering and ecology to create interdisciplinary solutions to water resources and ecosystem conservation challenges. Prior to joining Woolpert, Kyle was a researcher with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for 19 years, where he led a team

focused integrated water resource management. He serves as adjunct faculty at the University of Georgia, Brooklyn College, and the University of Maine.

Trevor Meckley

Scientific Program Manager, National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration

A lowly ecologist by training, he supports a national interdisciplinary research program called the Effects of Sea Level Rise (ESLR) Program. This program aims to understand the impacts of sea level rise and storms on natural and built environments and to develop best practices for including natural infrastructure considerations in coastal protection strategies. Trevor also co-leads a Partnership between NOAA and DOT, focused on resilient transportation.

Ram Mohan

Senior Partner, Anchor QEA, Inc.

Professor of Practice, University of Georgia

Dr. Mohan is an internationally recognized expert in coastal and nature-based solutions with more than 35 years of experience addressing complex coastal and environmental challenges, including navigation, dredging, habitat restoration, sediment management, and coastal resilience. As Senior Partner at Anchor QEA and Co Director of the Sustainable Sediment Management Program at the University of Georgia, he integrates applied research with practical engineering to advance sustainable natural infrastructure, leading national initiatives with the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center such as the Great Lakes Engineering with Nature Playbook and innovations in dredging and beneficial use, while advising state agencies, NGOs, ERP, VMRC, and VDEQ on coastal protection strategies. He has served in leadership roles with the Western Dredging Association, including President, received its Dredger of the Year award, contributed to advisory efforts with the National Academy of Sciences and the U.S. Army Science Board, and authored more than 250 publications and major guidance documents that have shaped policy and practice in natural infrastructure.

Jen Molnar

Resilience and Nature-Based Solutions Lead, AECOM

Jen Molnar serves as the Resilience and Nature-Based Solutions Lead for the US East Water at AECOM, where she works across business lines and regions to embed nature-based solutions, biodiversity enhancement, and climate adaptation strategies into resilient infrastructure portfolios. With more than 25 years of experience, Jen brings a multidisciplinary approach that bridges environmental science and engineering, policy innovation, economic valuation, and stakeholder alignment to help clients advance resilience and sustainability performance. Prior to joining AECOM in 2024, Jen spent 20 years at The Nature Conservancy (TNC), where she led interdisciplinary global research teams focused on developing scalable solutions for nature and climate – building the evidence base for nature-based solutions and enabling implementation through collaboration across disciplines and sectors. Jen provided technical and strategic leadership for science-based collaborations with companies to invest in nature-based solutions and shift to sustainable practices and business models. She has previous engineering consulting experience in remediation and hydrology.

Nicholas Muzia

Principal Engineer & Design Build Manager, Sea & Shoreline

Nick Muzia is a coastal restoration practitioner and project leader with Sea & Shoreline, where he specializes in the design and implementation of living shorelines and nature based coastal protection projects. He works closely with property owners, communities, and agency partners to translate ecological principles into practical, constructible solutions that enhance shoreline stability, habitat value, and long term resilience. His experience spans project development,

permitting coordination, and on the ground construction, with a focus on integrating science driven restoration into working waterfronts and developed coastlines.

Siddharth Narayan

Assistant Professor, East Carolina University

Dr. Siddharth Narayan is a civil and coastal engineer at East Carolina University based at ECU's coastal campus in the Outer Banks of North Carolina. His interdisciplinary research is centered around nature-based solutions for coastal hazard adaptation. Sid got his PhD from the University of Southampton in England and was a postdoctoral scholar and then assistant research professor at UC Santa Cruz before joining ECU.

April Newman

Project Manager, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

April Newman has more than 20 years of experience studying and managing wetland and riparian ecosystems and has led restoration projects in Louisiana since 2014. She is a Project Manager at the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana, overseeing marsh and barrier island projects from planning through construction. She is a charter member of CPRA's Barrier Island System Management team, advancing a comprehensive approach to sustaining Louisiana's barrier islands. She previously served as Staff Scientist and Acting Director of the Atchafalaya Basin Program at the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources. Earlier in her career, April worked with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in Oregon conducting stream surveys and monitoring anadromous fish migration. She holds a B.S. in Environmental Studies from the University of Nevada Las Vegas and two master's degrees from Louisiana State University in Forestry and in Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences, with research focused on wetland hydrology and soil carbon dynamics.

Heidi Nutters

Principal Program Manager, San Francisco Estuary Partnership

Heidi Nutters, Principal Program Manager, oversees the Adaptation and Resilience (ARTA) Technical Assistance programming with SFEP focused on nature-based shoreline solutions. This includes our highly successful local government resilience planning offerings, regional convenings and capacity building, and direct partnership with CBOs and Tribes. Prior to joining the Partnership, she managed the Coastal Training Program for the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. She received a B.A. in Cultural and Interdisciplinary Studies from Antioch College and a M.A. in Environmental Studies from Brown University.

Devon Parfait

Chief, Grand Caillou Dulac Band of the Biloxi Chitimacha Choctaw

Coastal Resilience Analyst, Environmental Defense Fund

Devon Parfait is Chief of the Grand Caillou Dulac Band of Biloxi Chitimacha Choctaw and a Coastal Resilience Analyst at Environmental Defense Fund, where he advances science-based strategies to address coastal land loss, climate adaptation, and restoration across Louisiana's working coast. Trained in geoscience at Williams College, he works at the intersection of data, policy, and community engagement, supporting research translation and collaboration among Tribal leaders, state agencies, and nonprofit partners. Drawing on both Indigenous knowledge and technical expertise, Chief Parfait is a leading voice on protecting cultural heritage, strengthening resilience planning, and shaping long term solutions for communities on the front lines of sea level rise.

David Perkes

Professor, Mississippi State University

David Perkes is a licensed architect, Professor for Mississippi State University, and the founding director of the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio, a professional outreach program of the College of Architecture, Art + Design. The design studio was established in Biloxi, Mississippi following Hurricane Katrina and provides planning, landscape and architectural design support to many Gulf Coast communities. Before the coast David ran the Jackson Community Design Center and taught in the School of Architecture's fifth year program. David has a BS degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering from Utah State University, a Master of Architecture degree from the University of Utah, a Master of Environmental Design degree from Yale University, and a Loeb Fellowship from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Jessie Ritter

Associate Vice President, Water and Coasts, National Wildlife Federation

Ritter leads the development and execution of the National Wildlife Federation's national water resources and coastal policy priorities. She oversees campaigns to protect clean water and wetlands, increase the resilience of communities in the face of climate change and natural disaster events, and conserve marine ecosystems. She also guides the Federation's federal advocacy work to advance nature-based solutions and restore key ecosystems—from the Everglades in South Florida to the Mississippi River and its delta in Louisiana. Ritter joined the National Wildlife Federation ten years ago after a Knauss Fellowship with the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee, where she covered the oceans and atmosphere portfolio. She has also worked for a number of other national non-profits on federal and state policy issues ranging from fisheries management to freshwater resources to coastal community resilience. She holds a Master of Environmental Management degree from Duke University's Nicholas School, and a B.S. in Zoology from North Carolina State University. Ritter now lives in North Carolina, but frequently travels to Washington, DC which was her beloved home for over a decade.

Maya Trotz

Professor, University of South Florida

Dr. Maya Trotz is a professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of South Florida. Her work fosters convergence research around various natural and built infrastructures with and within coastal communities. She co-directs a National Science Foundation Large-Scale Coastlines and People project: Strong Coasts that focuses on solutions with nature and people with sites in Miami, the US Virgin Islands and Belize. She also co-directs BlueGAP, broadening the community of people aware of and fighting to reduce nitrogen pollution. Co-creating knowledge with communities and combining stories with data for action, especially around water, are integral to her approach. She is a past President of the Association of Environmental Engineering & Science Professors and a board member of Fragments of Hope Corp, a non-profit focused on coral restoration in Belize.

Burton Suedel

Research Biologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Dr. Suedel is a research biologist at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Engineer Research and Development Center, Vicksburg, Mississippi. He obtained his bachelor's and master's degrees in biology from the University of North Texas, and his Ph.D. in biological sciences from the University of Mississippi. He has published over 70 peer-reviewed manuscripts and other publications, including the Engineering With Nature® Atlases published in 2018, 2021, and 2024 that demonstrate how EWN principles and practices are being incorporated into infrastructure planning worldwide. He has received international awards and recognition for applying EWN at multiple USACE inland and freshwater and marine coastal projects.

Francis Wiese

Marine Ecology Lead, Baird

Dr. Wiese is the Marine Ecology Lead for Baird, a global coastal engineering and science firm aimed at improving coastal systems around the world for people and the environment. Dr. Wiese is interested in affecting global change through robust science, innovation, partnerships, strategy, visioning, governance, and policy. He spent the last 30 years working around the world, designing, implementing, and managing large interdisciplinary, multi-institutional science programs that address important socio-ecological issues related to climate change, the ocean, and its uses, and providing strategic advice to companies and governments. His focus includes anthropogenic stressors, climate change, resilience, nature-based solutions, system science, environmental policy, adaptive management, governance, theory of change, and change management. He has worked for and with academia, government, non-profits, and industry in a variety of roles. Dr. Wiese maintains a diverse publication record, and he is a technical reviewer for over 20 international journals and serves on a variety of national and international science panels, boards, committees, and working groups. Francis lives in Alaska and has a B.Sc. in marine biology from University of Victoria and a PhD in marine conservation from Memorial University of Newfoundland.