

Statewide Ecosystem Assessment of Coastal and Aquatic Resources

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS



This document is a catalogue of the Subject Matter Experts involved in the Statewide Ecosystem Assessment of Coastal and Aquatic Resources (SEACAR) project. SEACAR is a collaborative process involving academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local, state, and federal natural resource managers, and using current knowledge of coastal processes and scientific data obtained from inventory and monitoring programs around the state to identify ecological indicators. The goal of the SEACAR products is to provide directly comparable and scientifically defensible statewide data on the status and trends of Florida’s coastal resources, and to be used to inform local and state management, planning, and policy decisions. Subject Matter Experts involved in SEACAR are listed in the following document by the habitat teams in which they are advising on.

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Jeffrey L. Beal (BS in Marine Biology, Jacksonville University; MS in Marine Science Florida Institute of Technology) has 26 years work experience with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Caribbean Marine Research Center, Florida Institute of Technology, and Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute on various aspects of marine/estuarine habitats in Florida and water quality effects on seagrasses, fishes, coastal wetlands, oyster reefs, and coral reef communities. He conducts grant-funded projects involving the restoration of aquatic habitats (mangroves, saltmarshes, seagrasses, coral reefs, oyster reefs, floodplain wetlands, and river oxbows) and the associated monitoring of biological and environmental parameters used to determine restoration success. He represents FWC on various habitat restoration and conservation teams and workgroups.



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Co-PI Jeremy Conrad is the Senior Wildlife biologist for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) at the JN "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Jeremy earned a BS, MS, from Florida Atlantic University (FAU) and is a current PhD candidate at FAU. Jeremy has worked for the USFWS for 15 years focusing his work on conservation and restoration of marine ecosystems. Most recently, Jeremy has established and monitors a statewide Surface Elevation Table Monitoring Network to assess coastal wetland vulnerability to sea level rise. He is a USFWS lead in mangrove forest ecology, coastal wetland vulnerability, and estuarine ecology. Jeremy is also a Co-PI for a multi-agency carbon stock assessment and sea level rise vulnerability project focused at Ding Darling NWR. Jeremy participates in number of marine/coastal/estuarine working groups including Coastal Habitat Integrated Mapping and Monitoring Program, Southwest Florida Restoration Team, and SEACAR.



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Dr. Todd A. Crowl is a quantitative ecologist with over 30 years of experience working on interdisciplinary ecosystems science and aquatic ecology projects. He is a Senior Scientist as part of the Luquillo Long-Term Ecological Research Program since 1994. In 2012, Todd established iUTAH, a statewide effort to assist in building the infrastructure needed to sustainably manage Utah's waters. In 2016, he and Florida International University (FIU) collaborators launched a Center of Research Excellence in Science and Technology for Aquatic Chemistry and the Environment at FIU. Todd was a Bullard Fellow at Harvard University and is an Office of Research Professor at the University of Notre Dame. He is the Founding Director of Florida International University's Institute of Environment, and co-Founder of the Sea Level Solutions Center. Crowl is currently President of the Association of Ecosystem Research Centers.



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Scott Eastman is the Assistant East Coast Regional Administrator for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection and serves as the Stewardship Coordinator for the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve. Scott's expertise lies mainly in the field of spatial ecology and remote sensing. Some of Scott's recent work was with the Ocean Conservancy where he assisted in an assessment and inventory of the environmental monitoring programs throughout the northern Gulf of Mexico, to help determine which programs might serve as the basis for a long-term monitoring program for the natural resources injured as a result of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. He also co-lead a project to identify stressors for the development of spatially-based cumulative impact score across the Gulf of Mexico for threatened and endangered sea turtle species.



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Dr. Ilka "Candy" Feller

Smithsonian Institution

Dr. Candy Feller is an insect and plant ecologist studying the effects of extra nutrients from fertilizer run-off on mangrove systems over time. At the Animal-Plant Interaction Lab at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, Candy studies the potential long-term impact of small doses of nitrogen and phosphorus used in commercial fertilizers on mangrove ecosystems. Candy first began exploring swamps in her grandmother's backyard as a child. Today, she has long-term experimental research sites in the Caribbean, Australia, New Zealand, Belize, Panama, Florida, and the Gulf of California, with new research sites starting in Bangladesh and Myanmar. Candy earned her PhD in Ecology from Georgetown University. Candy is the Chair of the July 2016 Mangrove & Macrobenthos Meeting in St. Augustine, FL.



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Dr. Brita Jessen is a Research Coordinator for Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Brita earned her PhD in Biological Oceanography at the University of Rhode Island. She has extensive experience in coastal ecological research, having investigated topics such as salt marsh nutrient dynamics and community interactions, climate change impacts on grasslands, climate effects on mangrove ecophysiology, and nutrient pollution effects on mangrove forest function. In 2014, Brita was a Research Fellow at the University of Rhode Island's Coastal Institute. As a fellow, she worked with natural and social scientists to address issues for coastal communities.



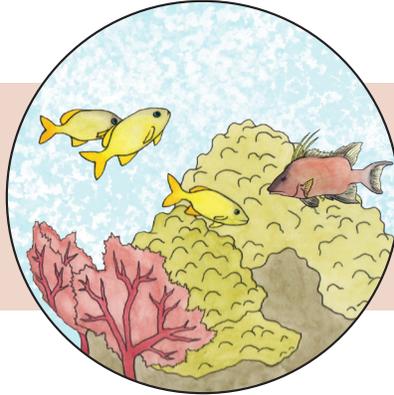
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Dr. Kara Radabaugh is a Biological Scientist III in the Coastal Wetlands Research Program at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) in St. Petersburg, FL. Kara is the coordinator of the Coastal Habitat Integrated Mapping and Monitoring Program and Oyster Integrated Mapping and Monitoring Program efforts at FWRI and has organized multiple workshops and the publication of two statewide reports with a network of coauthors. Her other research at FWRI focuses on carbon stock assessments, ecosystem stress, and habitat switching in coastal wetland communities. Kara earned a PhD in Biological Oceanography (2013) from the University of South Florida College of Marine Science and a BS of Biology (2007) from Hope College in Holland, Michigan.

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Dr. Brendan Biggs majored in Economics and Environmental Studies at St. Lawrence University before earning his doctorate in Biology from Florida State. He is primarily interested in the ecology and evolution of marine sponges—a diverse, abundant, and functionally important group of animals. In addition to investigating the effects of physical, environmental, and biological disturbances on sponges, he has examined how physical and resource allocation trade-offs influence their ability to recover from physical injury and explored the use of sponges in aiding reef restoration. Brendan’s research has taken him around the Caribbean (Belize, Curacao, Panama, and the Florida Keys) and he has worked in reef, seagrass, and mangrove habitats. In his current position at the Department of Environmental Protection, Brendan consults on resource permits.



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Katy Cummings hails from Wisconsin, far from modern coral reefs but with a bedrock of fossil ones. Katy went to Lawrence University for her undergraduate degrees in Biology and Geology, then received her MS in Interdisciplinary Ecology from the University of Florida. She worked for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Corals Group from 2015–2019, conducting benthic surveys with the Coral Reef Evaluation and Monitoring Program, disease outbreak sampling and reconnaissance, and was a team lead on an ecological indicators project for Gulf of Mexico coral communities. After working with the Habitat Restoration team at Biscayne National Park, she is now the Florida Keys Aquatic Preserves Manager with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection where she manages Lignumvitae Key and Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserves.



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Dr. David Gilliam

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Dr. David Gilliam is an Associate Professor at Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography, Nova Southeastern University. David manages the Nova Southeastern University Coral Reef Restoration, Assessment and Monitoring Lab. For more than 15 years, he has investigated US Endangered Species Act listed stony corals population ecology and recovery. David has maintained an in-water stony coral nursery offshore Southeast Florida since 2007 and has outplanted over 10,000 corals. He has managed the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Evaluation and Monitoring Project since its inception in 2003. David has also been the reef monitoring contractor for Broward County for nearly 20 years. He has been an advisor to Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on reef monitoring, damage, and restoration issues for more than 15 years.



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Dr. Matthew W. Johnson is a Research Fisheries Biologist with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) and Unit Lead for the Coral Reef Ecology Group in Miami, FL. He serves as the Lead Scientist for NOAA's National Coral Reef Monitoring for fish monitoring in the Atlantic and Research Coordinator for the SEFSC's coral and habitat related research. His research experience includes work with multiple long-term monitoring program across the Atlantic, Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico, and in habitats ranging from inshore estuarine to offshore environments.



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Caitlin Lustic is the South Florida Marine Conservation Manager for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) out of the Big Pine Key office. She leads the Conservancy's coral restoration work at Dry Tortugas National Park and throughout the Keys in partnership with other organizations, supports the Florida Reef Resilience Program Steering Committee and leads the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact's Shoreline Resilience Working Group. Caitlin has spent the last ten years conducting Disturbance Response Monitoring surveys, mainly in the Dry Tortugas and Lower Keys. Caitlin holds a Master of Environmental Management degree from Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment, and before coming to TNC she supported Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems (now Beaches, Inlets and Ports Program) through a contract with PBS&J (now Atkins).



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Jamie Monty is the Manager of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP), and Chair of the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI) Team. She supervises the FDEP CRCP staff who coordinate the SEFCRI Focus Areas, oversees the CRCP and SEFCRI projects, and works with the SEFCRI Vice-Chairs. She is responsible for management of the coral reefs within the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Area, a marine managed area that comprises the northern third of the Florida Reef Tract. Jamie started her professional career as a Research Assistant for Nova Southeastern University while obtaining her dual master's degrees in Marine Biology and Marine Environmental Science, where she worked on a variety of coral reef assessment, monitoring, mapping, restoration, and research projects.



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Dr. Nick Parr is the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Liaison and Program Consultant for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Nick received his bachelor's and master's from the University of Florida, and his PhD from Auburn University studying benthic reef ecology and sustainable fisheries. Currently, Nick's focus is on the variety of ecosystems in the Florida Keys and what can be done to protect and restore them while balancing human use.



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Stephanie Schopmeyer is an Associate Research Scientist with Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute Corals Program. Her responsibilities include conducting long-term coral reef demographic and disturbance response monitoring, providing expert advice for coral related management needs for the State of Florida, developing monitoring strategies for coral habitats, and serving as a scientific advisor to coral rescue efforts which focus on preserving the genetic diversity of Florida's corals through live gene banking. Stephanie graduated with a BS and MS from Georgia Southern University where she investigated the effect of environmental stressors on corals and she has over 20 years of research experience in coral population and community ecology, coral propagation and restoration, and nearshore seagrass habitat ecology.



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Dr. Brian Walker

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Dr. Brian K. Walker is a Research Scientist II at Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography, Nova Southeastern University. Brian's research centers on the spatial distribution of organisms, coral reef ecology and geology, reef fish ecology, and landscape/seascape ecology, particularly as they relate to the effects of anthropogenic stressors, latitude, and climate change. Of recent interest is conducting coral disease interventions in SE Florida and restoring populations through assisted reproduction of the most resilient individuals. He is active in habitat impact assessment and restoration, shallow and deep-water benthic habitat mapping. His GIS and Spatial Ecology lab uses GIS as a tool to study the ecology, distribution, and spatial arrangement of coastal and ocean habitats and other marine organisms to provide maps and spatial information for enhancement of knowledge, conservation, and resource management.

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Dr. Nikki Dix has been the Research Director at the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTM NERR) since 2013. Her research interests involve understanding how estuaries respond to natural and anthropogenic change with the intent of informing natural resource management. Nikki has a PhD from the University of Florida where she studied responses of plankton and oysters to eutrophication in the GTM estuary. At the GTM NERR, Nikki establishes research priorities and oversees long-term monitoring in the context of regional, state, and national objectives. Nikki also facilitates activities of visiting researchers and works to develop collaborations between, scientists, managers, educators, and the public.



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Dr. Stephen Durham earned a PhD in paleontology with a concentration in conservation biology from Cornell University in 2017. He came to work for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection the same year under a science policy fellowship awarded by the Gulf Research Program of the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. His research focuses on using paleontological data and techniques to help inform the management and conservation of ecosystems and natural resources, especially oyster reefs. He leads the historical oyster body size project—an ongoing investigation of historical oyster body size using samples of buried, dead shells from reefs around Florida. Stephen is also part of the SEACAR Project Team.



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Dr. Steve Geiger is a Research Scientist in the Marine Fisheries Research section of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and has worked for the state of Florida since 1988. He has worked in the Molluscan Fisheries group since 2001, leading the group since 2009. His current work focuses on shellfish monitoring and restoration, primarily scallops, oysters, and hard clams. Ongoing projects include bay scallop restoration in the Florida panhandle, monitoring of oysters as a valued ecosystem component for Everglades restoration, and an annual survey of bay scallop abundance and recruitment, development of a program to monitor gastropods. He received his BS in Marine Science in 1986 from Southampton College. He received his MS in 1993 and PhD in 1999 from the University of South Florida. He also has five years experience on crustacean fisheries research and four years of public outreach background.



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Laura Geselbracht has more than 30 years of experience working in environmental resources management and conservation, and has worked for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) since 1995. Throughout her career, Laura has focused on using science-based approaches to identify and implement solutions to coastal resource challenges. She holds a master's degree in Marine Policy with a focus on International Fisheries Policy and a bachelor's degree in Aquatic Biology, with a Marine emphasis. In 2015, Laura was awarded the Sam D. Hamilton Award for Transformational Conservation Science. She also supports TNC Florida's coastal habitat restoration efforts through design, implementation, and review of restoration monitoring plans. In collaboration with TNC's South Atlantic Bight Marine Assessment Team, she led the marine mammal and sea turtle component of the analysis.



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Dr. Eric Milbrandt is the Director of the Marine Laboratory at the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, where he has studied the effects of disturbance events on mangroves, seagrasses, and in the water surrounding the barrier islands. He earned a BS from Humboldt State University in Biology and a PhD from the University of Oregon in Biology. He has published his research and serves as a referee for *Estuaries and Coasts*, *Limnology and Oceanography*, and *Journal of Wetland Management*. Along with a team of scientists, he established the River, Estuary and Coastal Observing Network composed of real time water quality and weather sensors distributed from Beautiful Island to the Gulf of Mexico. Since 2009, he has designed and monitored several large-scale mangrove and oyster restoration projects in Clam Bayou and San Carlos Bay. He is a member of the graduate faculty at Florida Gulf Coast University.



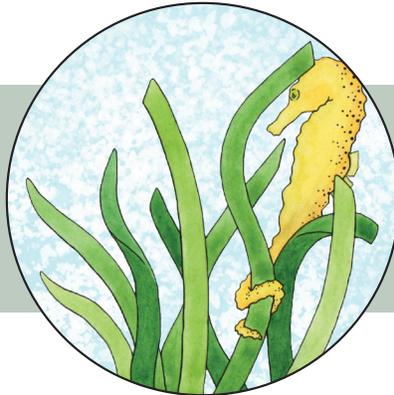
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Dr. Linda Walters is a Pegasus Professor of Biology at the University of Central Florida. Since moving to Florida in 1998, she has studied intertidal oyster biology, ecology, and restoration throughout the Southeastern United States. Her primary field research location, however, is the Indian River Lagoon, especially Mosquito Lagoon. In this location Linda, her students, and colleagues have examined many stressors on oysters including recreational boat wakes, invasive species, algal blooms, boring sponge, and microplastics. Her team is also examining the coupled human-natural ecosystem impacts of oyster and living shoreline restoration on oysters, infauna, mobile invertebrates, fishes, birds, and human sense-of-place.

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Dr. Susan Bell, Professor of Integrative Biology, and Distinguished University Professor at the University of South Florida (USF), received her PhD in 1979 in Marine Science from the University of South Carolina. Her principal areas of research are marine biology/ecology and restoration ecology. At USF Susan has received an Undergraduate Teaching Award, a Professional Excellence Award, a Presidential Excellence Award, and an Outstanding Faculty Award. She has co-edited one book, published over 120 scientific articles in refereed journals, and conducted international research in New Zealand, India, Brazil, Sweden, and Ghana. Recent topics of research include restoration of seagrass and mangrove ecosystems, impacts of the Deep Water Horizon oil spill on sandy beach ecosystems, and assessing changes in coastal landscapes. Susan was elected as an AAAS Fellow for contributions to the understanding of estuarine, salt marsh, and near-coastal habitats, and for her vision as an academic leader.



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Dr. Aaron Brown *University of Tampa*

Dr. Aaron Brown is a restoration ecologist focused on improving ecosystem design to optimize functionality. His research has evaluated how design variables and changing landscapes affect created systems over time. Aaron is currently honored to serve as the co-chair of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program's (TBEP) Technical Advisory Committee and as a member of TBEP's Management Board. He is also a founding member of the Southwest Florida Water Management District Habitat Restoration Committee.



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Melynda Brown is the manager of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, which consists of five estuaries in Southwest Florida. She earned a BS in Environmental Science, summa cum laude, from the University at Buffalo, NY, and has work experience with several environmental non-profit organizations, Mote Marine Lab, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. With over 15 years coordinating various monitoring programs at the Department of Environmental Protection, Melynda currently manages the long-term seagrass monitoring program which has been ongoing since 1999. She has published data in Florida Scientist and coordinates with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to develop the Seagrass Integrated Mapping and Monitoring Charlotte Harbor regional report. In her spare time, Melynda enjoys diving, boating, and playing soccer with her family.



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Dr. Jim Fourqurean is a Professor of Biological Sciences and Director of the Center for Coastal Oceans Research at Florida International University in Miami. He is a marine and estuarine ecologist with a special interest in benthic plant communities and nutrient biogeochemistry. Over the last 10 years, Jim has been helping translate the science of carbon dynamics in coastal ecosystems into actionable policy and climate change mitigation strategies. He is one of the lead scientists in the International Blue Carbon Working Group and he also serves as a scientific representative to the International Blue Carbon policy Working Group. Jim received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Virginia and completed a postdoctoral fellowship working on the Tomales Bay LMER program at San Francisco State University. He was recently elected as the next president of the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation.



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Dr. Penny Hall is a research scientist at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission.



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Dr. Jenny Hinton was born and raised in Tallahassee and has lived in Florida her whole life. She earned her BS degree in Biological Sciences from Florida State University and completed her dissertation “Ecological interactions influencing *Avicennia germinans* propagule dispersal and seedling establishment at mangrove-saltmarsh boundaries” at the University of South Florida. Jenny has worked in a wide variety of Florida’s coastal ecosystems, including seagrasses, mangroves, marshes, as well as oyster and coral reefs. In her current position as a Senior Program Analyst in the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection at the Department of Environmental Protection, she consults on Joint Coastal Permits and Environmental Resource Permits issued by the Beaches Inlets and Ports Program.

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Timothy Jones

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Timothy Jones grew up in Kansas but spent most of his summers working on his grandad’s mullet skiff in Clearwater, FL. He earned his BS degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology from Kansas State University in 1998, and began his career with Florida Department of Environmental Protection at Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in 2002. After four years working for the research department at Rookery Bay, Tim accepted a position as seagrass program manager for Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve. Seizing yet another growth opportunity in October 2012, he became manager of Big Bend Seagrasses and St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserves. Overseeing a field staff of two, the preserve conducts annual seagrass monitoring throughout the Big Bend region and has an extensive water quality monitoring program.

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Dr. Amanda Kahn is currently at the South Florida Water Management District in the Applied Sciences Bureau Coastal Ecosystem Section, working primarily in the Southern Indian River Lagoon, St. Lucie Estuary, and Caloosahatchee River Estuary. Amanda’s background includes seagrass monitoring, water quality monitoring, and research on physiology of marine photosynthetic organisms and how they respond to changes in the environment.

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Kris Kaufman is a Marine Habitat Resource Specialist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries, Restoration Center. Prior to joining the NOAA Restoration Center in the Southeast Region, Kris was a Senior Environmental Scientist with the Southwest Florida Water Management Districts' Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program. While at the SWIM Program, Kris spent more than 13 years leading nationally recognized seagrass mapping programs for five coastal estuaries in Southwest Florida and the Springs Coast region of the Gulf of Mexico in northern Florida. As a technical expert in landscape-scale seagrass geospatial mapping, she established program standards and analyzed trends in seagrass distribution.

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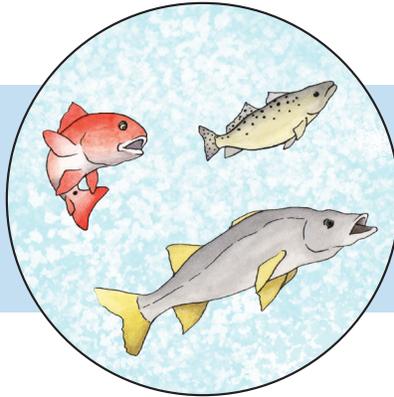
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Dr. Chris Anastasiou is a Chief Scientist with the Southwest Florida Water Management District. He works as a Subject Matter Expert and Springs Team Lead in charge of the restoration and protection of some of the most unique coastal spring systems in the world. Chris leads an inter-disciplinary team of scientists and engineers in design, permitting, and construction of research and restoration projects. Before working for the District, Chris has worked for the Naval Oceanographic Office, US Navy Reserve, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. He earned his PhD in Marine Science and a MS in Ecology from University of South Florida.



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Dr. Jerald S. Ault is Professor and Chair of the Department of Marine Ecosystems and Society at the University of Miami. Jerald is an internationally renowned fisheries scientist specializing in population dynamics, predictive analytics, ecosystem modeling, and risk assessment. He regularly provides expert testimony to US Fishery Management Councils, Florida Governors, US House Committee on Natural Resources, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries, National Park Service, International Council for Exploration of the Seas, International Union for Conservation of Nature, and International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean. Dr. Ault has been featured in print and TV media including PBS's Emmy® award-winning "Changing Seas", named Hero of Conservation by Field & Stream, and received numerous awards for his body of work in marine fisheries assessment and management.



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Jason Garwood is the Research Coordinator at Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (ANERR), which is one of 29 Reserves in the United States. His research interests are in fisheries biology and estuarine and coastal marine population and community ecology. Most of Jason's research has dealt with juvenile fish and macroinvertebrate communities in estuarine and tidal marsh systems. He has been at ANERR since 2009 where he served as a fisheries biologist, and then Research Coordinator in 2017. As coordinator, Jason co-manages multiple grant funded projects, which serve the ANERR system and the citizens of the State of Florida. He has served on multiple data management and analysis committees and has served as a scientific advisor representing the State of Florida in the US Supreme Court.



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Dr. Justin Grubich is the Science and Policy Expert for PEW Charitable Trusts. Justin has worked at PEW since 2013. The two main science-policy issues he covers are (1) SAV mapping, monitoring, and ecosystem services and management, and (2) forage fish research and conservation through the Forage Fish Research Program. Justin earned his PhD in Biology, Evolution, and Ecology from Florida State University in 2001. His scientific training is primarily in various aspects of ichthyology.



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Dr. Paul Julian

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Dr. Paul Julian has been with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in the Office of Ecosystem Projects since 2011. He manages the water quality team for the group providing technical and policy support to permitting and planning efforts surrounding Everglades Restoration. Julian is a graduate of Florida Gulf Coast University Marine and Ecological Sciences program (MS), University of Florida Soil and Water Sciences program (PhD) and is a professional wetland scientist with approximately 15 years of experience related to water quality and wetland and aquatic ecosystem science.



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Dr. Chris Kelble is the Deputy Director of the Ocean Chemistry and Ecosystems Division of the Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (AOML) and is the principal investigator for the Ecosystem Assessment and Modeling Laboratory at AOML. Chris's primary research interest is to holistically understand how humans alter coastal marine ecosystems and in turn how these coastal ecosystems help to support coastal communities. His research has ranged from understanding how altered watersheds affect salinity variability, and thus habitat suitability, to understanding how natural and anthropogenic drivers of change affect the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem. Chris currently serves on leadership committees for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Program, NOAA's Biscayne Bay Habitat Focus Area, NOAA's Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team, and the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Science Coordination Group.



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Tim MacDonald earned his BS from Jacksonville University and his MS from the University of South Florida. Tim began his career as a fisheries biologist for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute in 1988. Since 1989, he has managed the Fisheries-Independent Monitoring (FIM) program's databases. During the last five years, Tim has also overseen the FIM program's state-wide estuarine sampling. In recent years, Tim's research has emphasized the relationship between freshwater inflow and nekton abundance, distribution, and community structure; the importance of tidal tributary nekton communities; the age and growth of Sheepshead; and the impacts of perturbations upon nekton populations and community structure.



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Dr. Meagan Schrandt is an Associate Research Scientist in the Fisheries Independent Monitoring program where she focuses on data analysis of long-term fisheries monitoring data. She has over 10 years of experience collecting and analyzing fish ecology data. She has worked on projects related to coral reef fish behavior and how it's associated with the local habitat, population structure and dynamics of small coastal pelagic fishes, and how oysters and oyster reefs are affected by oiling from oil spills. Meagan began working for Florida's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute in 2016, after completing her MS degree in Marine Biology at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, followed by her PhD in Marine Sciences at the University of South Alabama.



Dr. Quinton White
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Dr. A. Quinton White Jr. is the Executive Director of the Marine Science Research Institute and Professor of Biology and Marine Science at Jacksonville University (JU). He has written numerous research and technical papers or reports and received grants and contracts to support marine research at JU. Currently, he is conducting research on the history of human impact on the Florida environment and especially on the St. Johns River with a focus on manatees and water quality issues. Quinton has been active in the Jacksonville community. He writes a monthly column in the Florida Times-Union called "River Life" focusing on river life and related issues. He serves as a consultant to the City of Jacksonville's Waterways Commission. He is President of the Southern Association of Marine Laboratories and past Chair and current board member of Southeastern Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association.

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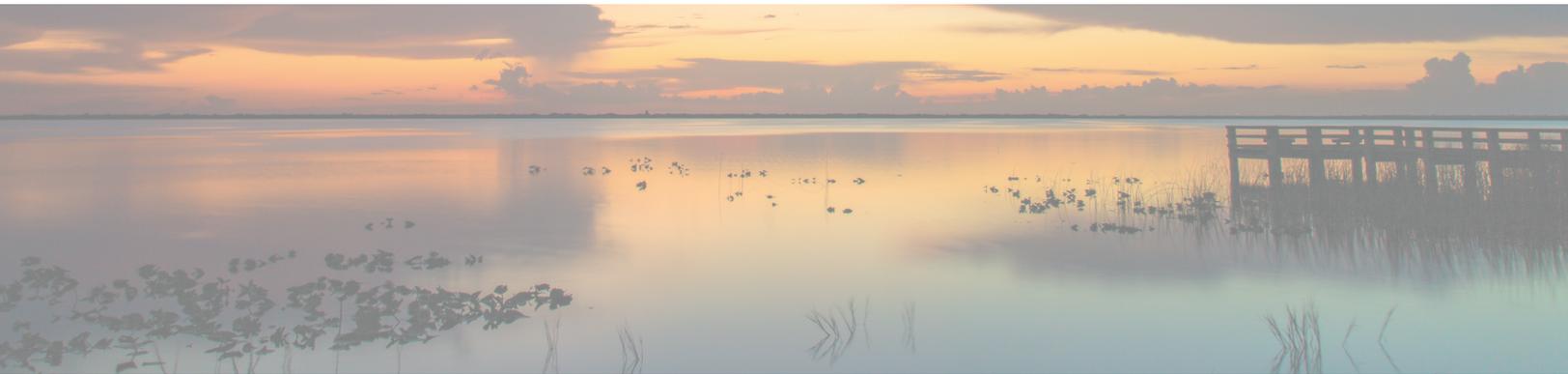


Nijole Wellendorf
Department of Environmental Protection

Nijole (Nia) Wellendorf is the administrator of the Aquatic Ecology and Quality Assurance Section within the Division of Environmental Restoration at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Her section maintains DEP's quality assurance requirements for sample collection and analysis and its freshwater bioassessment program. Since she started with DEP in 2001, she has also worked on development of numeric nutrient criteria and site specific water quality standards, and biological evaluations to support those standards. Nia holds a BS degree in Natural Resources from Cornell University and a MS degree in Aquatic Ecology from the University of Alabama. She especially loves aquatic plants, and enjoys exploring the natural areas and waterways of Florida with her family.

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PROJECT TEAM



Sunset over Lake Washington. Michael Steeley. CC BY 2.0.



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Cheryl Clark

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Cheryl Clark is the Coastal Projects Manager for the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection. She received a BS degree in Biodiversity and Conservation Biology from Cedar Crest College and began her career conducted a diverse array of field research including upland vegetation surveys, avian behavioral and nesting studies, alligator research, water quality monitoring, and submerged aquatic vegetation surveys. In 2008, Cheryl accepted a position with Florida Department of Environmental Protection at Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve and in 2016, she transferred to Tallahassee to lead the SEACAR project. Cheryl works closely with scientists and managers to facilitate the collaborative process and ensure the project is being successfully implemented, providing the best available science to inform management and policy decisions.



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Caroline Donovan

University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science

Caroline Donovan oversees project management, science communication, and data analysis at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science Integration and Application Network. Caroline has extensive experience in integrating scientific data into overall assessments, and in generating science communication materials. She has over 10 years of experience with ecosystem health report cards. In South Florida, Caroline led work to develop an ecosystem report card for the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, and she is currently leading an ongoing project to develop status reports for all US coral reef jurisdictions, including the Florida Reef Tract. She received her BS in Biology from the University of North Carolina-Wilmington and her MS in Biological Oceanography from the University of Maryland.



Dr. Stephen Durham

Department of Environmental Protection

Dr. Stephen Durham earned a PhD in paleontology with a concentration in conservation biology from Cornell University in 2017. He came to work for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection the same year under a science policy fellowship awarded by the Gulf Research Program of the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. His research focuses on using paleontological data and techniques to help inform the management and conservation of ecosystems and natural resources, especially oyster reefs. He leads the historical oyster body size project—an ongoing investigation of historical oyster body size using samples of buried, dead shells from reefs around Florida. Stephen is also part of the SEACAR Oysters habitat team.

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Stephanie Erickson

Department of Environmental Protection

Stephanie graduated from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and has been with the Department of Environmental Protection since 2001. She served in AmeriCorps with the Division of Recreation and Parks supporting state parks throughout the Southwest Florida region by conducting resource surveys and resource management activities. Stephanie currently works with the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection and has been with the Aquatic Preserve program for over 15 years. She has extensive experience in resource monitoring and has led or been involved with multiple monitoring programs including submerged aquatic vegetation, water quality, oysters and wading and diving bird nesting. She has been the manager of the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve since 2016.

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Claude Kershaw

University of South Florida

Claude Kershaw is the Database Applications Developer with the University of South Florida (USF) Water Institute at the School of Geosciences. Claude has been with USF since 2015 serving as a database administrator and providing web development, project management, and technical support. Claude has over five years of technical experience in various IT fields, including networking, software development, and hardware architecture. Claude earned his bachelor's degree in Management Information Systems at the USF in 2015, and his MS in Entrepreneurship in Applied Technologies at USF in 2017. Claude supports the databases driving the many websites hosted by the Water Institute, including the Water Atlas, Plant Atlas, and Water-CAT. He oversees and maintains all data load, processing, and quality assurance procedures.

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Dr. Shawn Landry

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Dr. Shawn Landry, PhD is a Research Associate Professor with the School of Geosciences and Director of the University of South Florida (USF) Water Institute, University of South Florida. His work addresses issues related to water, wetlands, urban forest, and land cover change, with a thematic focus on the spatial and temporal dynamics of human-environmental interactions, water resource management and policy, applied geospatial technology and online decision support systems. His team manages several publicly accessible websites that provide data and information about Florida's terrestrial and aquatic environments, including: wateratlas.org; water-cat.org; terra-cat.org; and plantatlas.org.



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Dr. Katie May Laumann

University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science

Dr. Katie May Laumann is a Science Integrator at the Integration and Application Network of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. She has her PhD in Marine Science from the College of William and Mary, where she studied fish biodiversity, phylogenetics, and biogeography. She earned a MA in Conservation Biology from Columbia University, where she studied seafood sustainability. Katie May has worked as a fisheries manager (at the Virginia Marine Resources Commission) and a marine science educator. She has also conducted coral reef genetics and submerged aquatic vegetation research.



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Emily Nastase

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Emily Nastase is a Science Communicator with the of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science Integration and Application Network (IAN). Her primary focus within IAN is to create accurate and compelling visuals to better disseminate scientific information to the target audience. Emily has extensive experience in science communication and development of ecosystem health report cards. She recently contributed to report cards on the Maryland Coastal Bays, the Texas Coast, the Verde River in Arizona, the Florida Everglades, and Bhitarkanika National Park in India. Prior to her work at IAN, Emily earned a dual degree in Biology and Scientific Illustration from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.



Kathryn Petrinec

Department of Environmental Protection

Katie Petrinec received a BS degree in Marine Science from Jacksonville University, and in 2006, began her career in water quality working as the manager of the System-Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) for the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTMNERR). There, she was responsible for implementing a long-term water quality and meteorological program. In 2014, Katie earned an AS degree in Computer Programming and transitioned into the SWMP Data Specialist role for the GTMNERR, where she currently performs data management and analyses of the SWMP data. In 2017, Katie joined the SEACAR team and serves as the Data Coordinator for the Water Quality Assessment and Integration Project and performs water quality data management for the Aquatic Preserves.

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Heather Stafford

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Heather earned her BS in Oceanography from Florida Institute of Technology, and her MS in Marine Biology from Florida Institute of Technology. For two years, she worked as a KCA Research independent contractor conducting recreational fish creel surveys for National Marine Sanctuary in the Florida Keys. Heather was a Biologist III Florida Department of Environmental Regulation, Punta Gorda, FL, conducting benthic macroinvertebrate sampling and identification. Since 1989, she has worked for the Florida Department of Natural Resources. She started as an Environmental Specialist I, then II, then III, then Environmental Manager, all in the SW Florida Aquatic Preserves program. Heather serves as the Regional Manager overseeing the management of ten Aquatic Preserves in the Estero Bay, Charlotte Harbor, and Tampa Bay Aquatic Preserves offices.

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Kim Wren

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Kim Wren serves as the Assistant Manager at the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve, where she ensures that operations, resource management, coastal resilience and conservation goals of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) are met. Kim also serves as the Northwest Florida Regional Aquatic Preserve Manager and oversees the management of the regions eleven aquatic preserves, as well as, the St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Preserve. She has worked for the DEP's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection for the last 19 years and has extensive experience in coastal resource management. Kim has a BS in Biology from Moravian College and has completed graduate studies within FSU's Oceanography Department.

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STEERING TEAM



Charlotte Harbor. Seamoor. CC BY-NC 2.0

Department of Environmental Protection Leadership



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Noah Valenstein

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Noah Valenstein is Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Noah has nearly 15 years of public service experience with governmental agencies and a passion for natural resource protection. His previous experience includes working on environmental, agricultural, and energy issues in the Executive Office of the Governor and Florida House of Representatives, as well as with several of Florida's leading environmental nonprofit groups. Noah was born in Gainesville, Florida, and graduated with honors from the University of Florida's School of Natural Resources and Environment. He also holds a law degree from Florida State University. Noah resides in Tallahassee with his wife, Jennifer, and daughter, Ava.



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Adam F. Blalock

Department of Environmental Protection

Adam Blalock, Deputy Secretary for Ecosystems Restoration, is responsible for overseeing Statewide water supply, restoring and protecting Florida's aquatic ecosystems including the Everglades, managing aquatic research, monitoring and laboratory analysis, funding water and wastewater infrastructure, and governing coastal protection and resiliency. Previously, Adam worked at Hopping, Green & Sams, specializing in natural resource legislation and environmental permitting on the local, state and national levels. Adam also has a wealth of experience in public environmental law. In addition to his legal experience, Adam holds a Juris Doctor and master's degree in Environmental Law and Policy from the Vermont Law School and a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Florida. Adam is also an active member of the Environmental Land Use Section of the Florida Bar.



Frank Powell

Department of Environmental Protection

As the Assistant Deputy Secretary of Ecosystem Restoration for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Frank plays a key role in administering four divisions at the FDEP and oversees the largest environmental restoration project in the world on its behalf—restoring America’s Everglades. In addition to other ecosystem restoration projects throughout Florida, the offices ensure effective implementation of FDEP’s policy, programmatic, technical, and regulatory responsibilities to ensure the state of Florida’s interests are represented through policy and program development, which includes legislation, funding, project scheduling, and integration of priorities across the plans referenced above to ensure a holistic approach to Florida ecosystem restoration. Frank is a Certified Public Manager, Registered Environmental Manager and Project Management Professional.

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Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection Leadership



Alex Reed

Department of Environmental Protection

Alex Reed was appointed Director of the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection in November 2019. The office has a multi-faceted approach to resilience, including coral reef protection, preservation of coastal and aquatic management areas, beach and inlet management, and the implementation of ecosystem restoration projects to prepare Florida’s coastal communities and state-managed lands from the effects of sea level rise, coastal flooding, erosion and future storms. Alex has been with the Department since 2009, serving in a variety of roles and most recently as the Director of the Division of Water Resource Management. Alex earned a BS in Geology from Florida State University.

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Lainie Edwards

Department of Environmental Protection

Dr. Lainie Edwards is the Deputy Director of the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection at the Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). She oversees all of the beaches regulatory and planning programs, which includes regulation of coastal construction, regulation of beach restoration and nourishment projects, permitting of inlet management and beach erosion control structures; and environmental resource permits for dredging of deepwater ports. Permitting includes natural resource reviews of potential impacts to seagrass, mangrove and hardbottom communities and beach and inlet strategic planning. Lainie has worked for FDEP for over 15 years. Prior to her position as Deputy Director, she served as a manager and an administrator of the Beaches, Inlets, and Ports program. Lainie has a PhD in Chemical Oceanography from Florida State University and an BS in Biology from Duke University. Lainie has two boys and enjoys water sports, movies and craft beer.

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Holly Edmond

Department of Environmental Protection

Holly Edmond is the Coastal Program and Grant Administrator for the Florida Coastal Management Program, in the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection (RCP). She holds a bachelor’s degree in Marine Science Affairs from University of Miami and a master’s degree in Marine Affairs and Policy from the University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science. Holly recently joined the RCP team after working in the Office of Agricultural Water Policy for nearly thirteen years and is excited to participate as a member of the SEACAR Steering Team.

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Department of Environmental Protection Regional Administrators



Jennifer Harper

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Jenna Harper is currently a Program Administrator for the Department of Environmental Protection’s Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection. Over the last five years, she has served as the manager of the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve and regional administrator for the Aquatic Preserves from Pensacola to Crystal River. Previous to her position as manager, Jenna was the Research Coordinator for the Research Reserve. In that role, her team conducted priority monitoring and facilitated research to further the science of, and inform the management of, Apalachicola Bay’s resources, particularly the oyster fishery. Jenna has a MS in Zoology, with an emphasis in Fisheries Biology, from the University of New Hampshire.

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Keith Laakkonen

Department of Environmental Protection

Keith Laakkonen is the director of the Rookery Bay Research Reserve and the Program Administrator for the Southwest Region of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection. Laakkonen also serves as the Vice-President of the National Estuarine research Reserve Association. Keith has worked in resource management at several conservation areas including Charlotte Harbor State Buffer Preserve, St. Martin’s Marsh Aquatic and Buffer Preserve, Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve, and was formerly the Stewardship Coordinator at Rookery Bay Research Reserve. Before rejoining the team at the Reserve, he worked for seven years as Environmental Sciences Coordinator for the Town of Fort Myers Beach. Keith holds a BS in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Florida and a MA in Environmental Studies at Florida Gulf Coast University focused on Sea-Level Rise Policy.

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Dr. Michael Shirley

Department of Environmental Protection

Dr. Michael Shirley is director of the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve. He serves as regional program administrator for Florida Department of Environmental Protection's East Coast Aquatic Preserve Program. Mike has also held positions as a research biologist, resource management coordinator and research coordinator at the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. He has held adjunct faculty appointments with Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida International University, Florida Southwestern State College, and Hodges University. He has a PhD in Marine Science with a minor in Environmental Toxicology from North Carolina State University, a MS in Biology from the University of West Florida, and a BS in Zoology from the University of Rhode Island.

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Joanna Walczak

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Joanna Walczak is the Southeast Regional Administrator for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Florida Coastal Office. Based in Miami, she oversees the Biscayne Bay, Lignumvitae, and Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserves, Florida's Coral Reef Conservation Program, and she co-manages the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. She is also the State of Florida's Point of Contact for the US Coral Reef Task Force and US All Islands Coral Reef Committee. Joanna holds two degrees in Marine Biology—both with a focus on coral reefs. She specializes in stakeholder engagement in conservation issues, as well as permitted and un-permitted coral reef injury assessment, mitigation, and enforcement.

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