

# Advancing the Knowledge and Application of Blue Carbon in the US

**Intent:** The purpose of this briefing is to share advances in blue carbon science and policy, and invite discussion of new opportunities in support of US goals.

In recent years we've come to understand the importance of coastal wetlands such as saltmarsh, seagrass, and mangroves to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in wetland soils for centuries. These nature-based "blue carbon" ecosystems can remove and store 10 times more carbon per acre from the atmosphere than forests. These same coastal wetlands provide numerous other critical ecosystem services such as habitat for birds, fish, and shellfish; water filtration; storm and flood protection; as well as economic and recreational opportunities and benefits. In the U.S., we've made substantial progress in understanding blue carbon and how this ecosystem service can help us to strengthen and increase the protection and restoration of coastal wetlands while sequestering additional carbon dioxide.

Restore America's Estuaries, in collaboration with the co-chairs of the **Congressional Estuary Caucus**, Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, Rep. Rick Larsen, Rep. Brian Mast, and Rep. Bill Posey, invite you to attend this blue carbon briefing.

## Speakers:

Jeff Benoit, Restore America's Estuaries (*moderator*)  
Dr. Stephen Crooks, Silvestrum Climate Associates  
Steve Emmett-Mattox, Restore America's Estuaries

## Agenda:

- **Opening Remarks** – Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici
- **Blue Carbon 101** – Emmett-Mattox
- **Status of Blue Carbon in the US** – Crooks
- **Recommendations for a Path to Advance a US Blue Carbon Program**
  - Know What We Have
  - Protect Existing Blue Carbon Ecosystems
  - Restore What Has Been Lost – where we can
  - Improve BC Ecosystems Knowledge
- **Q&A** – (20 min)

## Details:

November 20, 2019  
11:30 – 12:30 p.m. Eastern  
2325 Rayburn Building

*Pizza will be provided.*

### **Jeff Benoit-President, Restore America's Estuaries**

Jeff Benoit is the President and CEO of Restore America's Estuaries, a national alliance of 10 community-based conservation organizations dedicated to restoring critical estuarine habitats. He has over 30 years of experience and leadership in coastal management and marine conservation. A coastal geomorphologist by training, Jeff started his career with the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Program as a coastal geologist and later served as Director. From 1993 to 2001 Jeff was Director of NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) where he had oversight of the National Coastal Management Program, National Marine Sanctuary Program, and National Estuarine Research Reserve Program. He has served on several National Academy of Sciences select Committees on coastal management. Jeff is a former President of The Coastal Society, a professional volunteer organization of coastal and marine professionals.

### **Dr. Stephen Crooks-Principal, Silvestrum Climate Associates**

Dr. Stephen Crooks is a wetland scientist and geomorphologist with 25 years of experience in the application of nature-based solutions and response of coastal wetland systems to human impacts and climate change. As a founding Principal of Silvestrum Climate Associates, LLC. Dr. Crooks specializes in translating scientific information to formats accessible to policy and decision makers as well as senior-level managers.

He has contributed to, and leads, numerous committees and interdisciplinary research groups. He was a lead author of the IPCC 2013 Wetland Supplement. He is an Approved Methodology Expert to the Verified Carbon Standard. He led the U.S. interagency/science community Coastal Wetland Carbon Working Group, incorporating coastal wetlands within the U.S. Inventory of GHG Emissions and Sinks. He also co-chairs the carbon advisory panel for the Global Environmental Facility Blue Forest Project and is the co-founder of International Blue Carbon Initiative. He worked for 15 years with engineers and planners to restore coastal wetlands. His work and communication on coastal wetlands and natural infrastructure and contributed to the emergence of blue carbon in international policy discussions.

### **Steve Emmett-Mattox, Strategic Programs Director, Restore America's Estuaries**

Steve Emmett-Mattox has worked with Restore America's Estuaries for nearly 20 years, where he launched the US blue carbon initiative in 2009. He promotes and manages projects to develop the science and tools to use blue carbon as a catalyst for increased investment in coastal ecosystem restoration and conservation. He co-managed the technical teams that wrote the wetland requirements for the Verified Carbon Standard, the global Tidal Wetland and Seagrass Restoration Methodology (VM33), and the global tidal wetland and seagrass conservation methodology (VM007), which is pending final approval by the VCS. He co-created and co-led more than a dozen blue carbon workshops for coastal managers, advocates and scientists and regularly briefs agencies and policy makers. And he helped launch and contributed to several estuary-scale blue carbon assessments and blue carbon finance project feasibility studies. He was a member of the International Blue Carbon Science and Policy working groups, as well as the North American Blue Carbon Working Group (Commission for Environmental Cooperation).

Steve also played a pivotal role in creating and managing other major program areas at RAE, including the biennial National Conference and the Community-Based Restoration Partnership with NOAA. Steve has thirty years of experience in environmental conservation.