

Interagency Collaboration Toward a National Coastal Ecosystem Prediction System - Rebecca Atkins

With unprecedented federal investments in coastal community and ecosystem resilience, federal, state, tribal, and local entities are tasked with determining their vulnerability, identifying activities towards mitigating current and future risk, and prioritizing which actions to propose for financial and leadership-level support. Those funding the work are tasked with evaluating and selecting from proposals that may lack innovation or offer a limited understanding of how different possible actions will perform in combination.

NOAA's Effects of Sea Level Rise (ESLR) Program has spent the past eight years incentivizing the collaboration of interdisciplinary teams across the country to advance the science and products needed to inform coastal managers of local coastal vulnerability and solutions to mitigate food risk, while also holistically considering the built and natural infrastructure. However, there is a need to integrate these efforts with other funding opportunities that support the implementation of on-the-ground resilience projects. Ultimately, this will help to ensure that the advanced science capable of evaluating climate, flood, and management scenarios is being used to maximize federal investments.

This talk will highlight NOAA's Effects of Sea Level Rise (ESLR) Program to discuss a range of program-level considerations, from identifying science gaps to facilitating science advancement and application at local and regional scales. We will present several case studies representing successful collaboration, as well as strategies and lessons learned for connecting cutting-edge science to coastal communities seeking technical assistance.

Creating an AmeriCorps Program for Youth Environmental Career Development - Zachary Nickerson

The American Littoral Society expanded our long-running Restoration Corps (R-Corps) program to create a new AmeriCorps program within the existing summer program, adding more opportunities for crew members to work with the Society in both independent and leadership roles. Through this program we have added to the options available while facilitating fair wages and new educational opportunities, allowing us to build on our work to expand accessibility of R-Corps in the local, low-income areas in which we work through community engagement, the application process, transportation, and compensation. The minimum length of the program necessitated the addition of an extra day of work during the week and an earlier start time, both of which are filled with different hands-on, skill-building experiences for crew members. The connection between upland and Bayshore habitats is a major focus of their work. This includes building and maintaining green stormwater infrastructure, freshwater stream monitoring, and school programming in upland communities, leading to horseshoe crab tagging, building oyster reef habitat, and monitoring of beach restoration efforts. The AmeriCorps program also offers an opportunity for returning crew members to grow in their involvement with the Society by practicing leadership and independent work skills. We will discuss the process of starting this new program, the logistics of running it in parallel with the existing Restoration Corps program, as well as successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

Media with Impact: Building A Community-Driven Model for Environmental Justice Coverage in the Great Lakes Region - Hira Ahmad

Due to the financial strain of the journalism industry since the early 2000s, local media coverage has been on a decline and created a void of reliable news sources for many underserved communities. Alongside the decrease in local media coverage, large, privately-owned and corporatized mainstream media have been a predominant source of news. Both the corporatized media and the decline in locally-sourced news have contributed to less accurate and authentic reporting of frontline environmental justice communities. Specifically, with regard to the environmental journalism field, many journalists lack the general knowledge, training, and resources to accurately report on environmental justice issues. In lieu of this situation, there is a growing need and interest to help rebuild media organizations to more equitably uplift the narratives of frontline environmental justice communities.

While some existing toolkits and literature provide media organizations with suggestions on how to equitably engage with communities and/or how to center equity in environmental and climate change reporting, this study seeks to further the field by prioritizing the diverse insights of key stakeholders into a comprehensive set of recommendations intended for both media organizations and philanthropic institutions. The key findings from our study have been operationalized into a toolkit that provides recommended goals, strategies, and actions for media organizations and journalists to advance equitable and community-based environmental journalism. Thus, the recommendations in this report and our corresponding toolkit will help to amplify the lived experiences and stories of frontline environmental justice communities in order to promote community change.