

Finding Efficiencies among Mid-Atlantic Resource Managers, Restoration Practitioners and Research Scientists through CHARRM - Danielle McCulloch

The Coastal Habitat and Aquatic Resource Research and Monitoring (CHARRM) workgroup facilitates communication and collaboration among Mid-Atlantic State and Federal regulatory / resource agencies, restoration practitioners, and research scientists on coastal habitat restoration and associated data collection issues. Hosted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries, regulatory and resource managers cooperatively inform and drive action items. Objectives include: 1) ensuring data collection around restoration work meets shared objectives and answers outstanding resource questions; 2) creating an open forum to share knowledge and discuss current and emerging topics; and 3) increasing efficiencies among resource/ regulatory agencies, restoration practitioners, and research scientists. CHARRM provides a model that can be replicated in other regions to assist with the streamlining of regulatory permitting related to ecological restoration work, to share lessons learned from using new restoration tactics, and to facilitate an open dialogue between the regulatory and restoration practitioner community. This presentation will introduce CHARRM, summarize CHARRM accomplishments, and describe how CHARRM communication strategies and products drive action and increase efficiency. We will also share CHARRM resources, which include results from our listening sessions, recorded learning webinars, restoration-related fact sheets, and the status of our first collaborative permit guidance document. Join us to get involved or learn more about how this group can help you and your coastal habitat restoration-related work.

Southern New England Habitat Area of Particular Concern: An Ocean Conservation Tool in the New Frontier of Offshore Wind Expansion - Sabrina Pereira

Offshore wind energy development is rapidly expanding in offshore waters of the Northeast United States, particularly in southern New England (SNE). The individual and cumulative impacts of now 9 proposed wind farms, are likely to have a multitude of impacts on the natural habitats and marine resources around the proposed lease areas. In response to increasing wind energy development, NOAA Fisheries has designated a Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) within and around wind lease areas in SNE, in addition to Cox Ledge, to provide additional conservation focus on cod-spawning grounds and complex benthic habitats known to serve important habitat functions to federally managed species. The New England Fishery Management Council recommended the HAPC designation due to concerns about the potential adverse impact on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) from the development of offshore wind energy projects. HAPCs are subsets of EFH that exhibit one or more of the following traits: rare, stressed by development, provide important ecological functions for federally managed species, or are especially vulnerable to anthropogenic degradation. The SNE HAPC will be used as a tool to concentrate effective EFH conservation recommendations on HAPC resources, and facilitate increased dialogue with Federal action agencies that propose projects in the HAPC. This presentation will provide an overview of the newly implemented HAPC (e.g. its location, the resources within it), the data and alternatives considered as part of its development, and the resulting legal and management implications for wind energy, and ocean planning more broadly, from the HAPC's designation.

Public-private partnerships to support and enhance flooding resilience - Brian Glazer

Tidal flooding, king tide events, intensifying storm surge, coastal erosion, and atmospheric perturbations are combining with increased frequency to have significant impacts on coastal infrastructure and changing shorelines. Climate models predict more intense rainfall and increased coastal flood risk due to higher storm surge caused by rising seas. Sea level rise is increasing the frequency of coastal flooding and communities face an urgent need to adapt. In recent years, flooding has become more frequent along the U.S. coastline as documented at 33 long-term measurement sites; every site measured has experienced an increase in coastal flooding since the 1950s. Until recently, tracking flooding events and monitoring water levels were left to government experts and academic scientists who had insight into changing conditions over local, regional, and global scales. However, coastal changes are becoming more widespread and there is a growing need for new data in different locations to fill large gaps in monitoring. Community managers, municipalities, and residents now have the ability to empower communities and help fill these gaps to quantify, inform, and prevent further loss in the face of accelerating climate change impacts. Technology has shifted in the past several years making widespread ocean and watershed observations accessible, accurate, and easy to understand. Continuous, unattended coastal observations are critical for improving predictive models and disaster preparedness. This means open data can bring municipalities, federal government, and community-led initiatives together so that they can redirect preparedness, action and information, and place power with the people that are impacted most. One way to do this is with affordable and durable sensors that provide real-time water-level monitoring using solar power and cell phone data networks. The growth in these platforms has allowed for improved coverage of information at the local level, embedded within the broader national sensor network of federally-maintained gauges. Here, we report on how emerging technologies can be successfully transferred from academic research laboratories to operational service-based partnerships, using examples from how Hohonu has successfully engaged and empowered communities around the U.S. to scale ocean observing technologies, data availability, and science-based decision-making strategies.

DC Needs Your Voice: Why Engage With the Federal Government - Emily Patroliia

If you've been following the news, chances are you think the federal government struggles to get anything done. But like the ocean, DC's chaotic surface waters conceal steady currents that run deep. Policy initiatives that impact ocean and coastal ecosystems are receiving increasing attention. Congress recently invested an unprecedented amount of money into ocean research, coastal resilience, and coastal communities. Federal agencies are looking for help as they implement new funding and laws. Decision makers need your input and ideas as they shape our country's future.

Now is the time for the community to lean into engagement with the federal government. But how do you cut through the noise and make a real impact? This session, led by Emily Patroliia, Founder and CEO of ocean policy consulting firm ESP Advisors, will explore the foundations and benefits of effective government advocacy, education, and outreach—from how to tell your story to why and when to plug in.

Protecting Coastal Communities through Local Wetland Ordinances: An Overview of Case Studies from Across the Country - Portia Osborne

Wetlands play an integral role in protecting coastal communities from flooding and storm damage, improving water quality, and providing habitat for fish and wildlife. However, coastal freshwater and saltwater wetlands are being lost at a rapid rate due to development and other factors. While federal and state regulations provide protection for many coastal wetlands, there is great variation state-to-state in the extent of protections and types of wetlands that are covered. Coastal communities can further protect their wetlands from development and safeguard their communities using local ordinances. This presentation will provide an overview of eight case studies of coastal communities across the country with local wetland protections. The case studies were developed to highlight the challenges and successes that local governments face when enacting and implementing wetland protections. The local governments included in these case studies vary in size, geography, and regulatory context; however, common themes were observed across the communities. This presentation will focus on lessons learned from the eight communities profiled in these case studies and will provide examples that may be useful for other coastal communities interested in protecting their wetland resources.