

Inclusive Adaptation: Coastal Restoration with a Social Equity Lens - Angela Schedel

Coastal restoration experts are experimenting with various methods to incorporate social equity in the prioritization of design alternatives. The Justice40 Initiative set a goal that 40% of the benefits of federal investments should support disadvantaged communities. This drives applicants for NOAA National Coastal Resilience Fund grants to evaluate social equity. The data used for this estimate typically comes from a compilation of U.S. Census data related to risk and vulnerability. The CDC's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) and EPA's Environmental Justice mapping and screening tool, EJScreen, are most often used to provide decision makers with a basis for objectively justifying funding requests for coastal restoration projects.

An alternative method for assessing social equity is an economic approach called "weighted BCA" (WBCA). WBCA emerges from economic theory on project and policy evaluation from the 1940s. HDR funded a research program to determine how to apply this concept to infrastructure projects, forming an expert panel to provide insights on the research and conclusions. The WBCA method determines project benefits by accounting for incomes of beneficiaries, since economic research has shown that as a person's income increases, the value of an additional dollar to that person declines. The implication is that residents with lower incomes gain more value from outcomes such as flood risk mitigation, often a goal of a coastal restoration project in an estuarine environment. Sufficient evidence exists to apply WBCA, and this presentation will present ideas of how to incorporate social equity into coastal resilience and restoration projects.

The Leadership Imperative: Supporting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility Efforts in Marine Science - Shani Dellimore Barrax

The Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF)'s Inclusive Leadership Program (ILP) brings together early, mid, and late-career professionals in marine science to build capacity towards diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, access, and justice in the field. Culminating their participation is a leadership project where they address a need within the profession. Critical to each project's success, however, is the support and engagement of leadership in their respective organizations.

In this session, insights from ILP participants will be shared regarding their projects and the leadership profiles needed to support their efforts. These will include representation from their myriad of professional entities including higher education, federal, and non-profit. Their goals not only represent the future of representation, equity, belonging, and access in the field of marine science, but the support required from their respective organizations and their leadership to actualize their efforts beyond the performative towards those that lead to substantive change.

Equity and Environmental Justice at NOAA Fisheries – an opportunity for reflective change - Natalie Cosentino Manning

NOAA Fisheries is responsible for managing the nation's ocean resources and habitats. We use the best science available to make fisheries sustainable and productive, provide safe seafood, conserve protected resources, and maintain healthy ecosystems. It is our goal to make these services available to everyone, such that no community is underserved. In 2021, NOAA Fisheries convened an Equity Environmental Justice (EEJ) Working Group to improve information sharing, coordinate internal expertise about EEJ in our line office and develop an EEJ strategy. This presentation will describe the results of a multi-year iterative process working with NOAA staff, and a wide array of individuals and organizations from across the country. During this process, we learned that while NOAA Fisheries' work has incorporated elements of EEJ and made some improvements, our efforts to date have not been coordinated and have not always met the scope, magnitude, and duration of the challenges facing underserved communities. We will share our current strategy and how we are working towards three overarching goals to move us closer to EEJ for all: 1) Prioritize identification, equitable treatment, and meaningful involvement of underserved communities; 2) Provide equitable delivery of services; and 3) Prioritize EEJ in our mission work with demonstrable progress.

Conducting a Large-Scale Environmental Justice Needs Assessment for the Long Island Sound Region - Jimena Perez-Viscasillas

Long Island Sound's coastal communities are home to more than 4 million people and include highly diverse cities and towns such as Bridgeport, New Haven, and New York City. In 2023, partners from the Long Island Sound Study estuary program (LISS) worked with a contractor to conduct a region-wide environmental justice needs assessment in the Long Island Sound region. The project's main aim was to better understand the needs and challenges faced by underserved communities around the Sound, and to facilitate new connections and relationships between the estuary program and community-based groups. This assessment was likely one of the first of its scale, with needs assessments usually being conducted at very local levels, and among the first of its kind in its aim to foster relationship-building in the process. In this presentation, LISS partners from New York Sea Grant will walk through the steps and considerations taken during the project's development and implementation, share lessons learned in the experience, and discuss what comes next.