



**January 26, 2023 TCS-Duke Coastal Career Workshop
Combined Speaker Bios, Headshots, & Contact Information**



Tricia Hooper is an ocean expert who is passionate about using science to inform policy-making and improve outcomes for people and the planet. An experienced facilitator and leader, she thrives in convening diverse teams to solve today's environmental management problems. Tricia first joined The Coastal Society in 2014 and served on the Board of Directors from 2018 to 2022, during which she volunteered as Chair of the organization's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group and was a member of the TCS Development Committee. Tricia served as TCS President-Elect in 2022 and is now beginning her term as TCS President.

In her full-time job, Tricia is a *Regional Coastal Management Specialist at NOAA's Office for Coastal Management*. In this capacity, she serves as a policy and technical expert on the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), advancing the programmatic capabilities, effectiveness, and efficiency of CZMA Programs across the New England, Mid Atlantic, and the Great Lakes. Previously, Tricia worked as a Program Coordination Officer supporting NOAA's Office of the Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, where she advised the NOAA Administrator on eight National Ocean Service programs, and enhanced collaboration on a diverse portfolio of scientific and management issues across the agency. Tricia can be reached at phooper410@gmail.com.



Avery Siciliano is a global sustainability professional passionate about building climate-resilient and ethical supply chains. She currently works as a *Senior Manager on the Surety of Supply and Sourcing Innovation Team at Walmart*. In this role, Avery implements sustainability solutions with suppliers to increase the resiliency of food value chains. Prior to Walmart, she led corporate responsibility at the Global Seafood Alliance's Best Aquaculture Practices certification program. For the past ten years she has worked to advance responsible seafood production and healthy oceans through strategic partnerships, stakeholder engagement, and third-party verification at every step of the value chain.

Avery holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Vassar College and a master's degree in environmental management from Duke University. She most recently earned her MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. Avery has been involved with TCS for nearly a decade, first as President of the Duke University Student Chapter and most recently as Secretary on the Board of Directors. Avery can be reached at averysiciliano@gmail.com.



Alexis Maxwell is currently a *Communications and International Policy Specialist at NOAA's Office of Coast Survey*. In this capacity she supports policy and planning processes related to international governance in bilateral and multilateral settings, supports leadership in decision-making processes on program and policy issues, and supports a range of communication and outreach materials. Prior to supporting Coast Survey's communication and international programs, Alexis served as a policy analyst with the Global Ocean Forum, where she facilitated the preparation and presentation of policy recommendations from the NGO perspective to the United Nations, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and other international processes. Alexis holds a master's degree in marine policy from the University of Delaware where her research focused on state level management of the summer flounder resource under climate driven stock movement. She also had several internships while completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Environmental Studies at American University, including interning in the Office of Senator Patrick Leahy where she experienced congressional processes and government relations firsthand. Alexis can be reached at alexis.maxwell@noaa.gov.



Diego Perez-Segnini is a *Program Manager and Finance Manager at ERT Corp.* with 13+ years' experience in federal contracting and government cost accounting. He has a B.S. in Finance and is currently finishing an M.S. in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning for Business Ventures. For the last seven years Diego has been serving as a direct supervisor for a large geographically disbursed contractor workforce that provides support for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) Office of Habitat Conservation (OHC). In this role, Diego has performed dozens of recruitments, traveling to various locations to provide in person onboarding and exiting support. Diego also serves as a direct point of contact for senior federal government officials and has created and maintained a wide range of financial and resource management tools that help support the OHC's mission. Diego is inspired by the ERT/OHC team and the amazing work they do for our planet. In his free time, he advocates for sustainable living choices and enjoys being outdoors and in the water whenever possible. Diego can be reached at diego.perez-segnini@ertcorp.com.



Gina Mason is the *Lead Policy Analyst for NOAA's Restoration Center in the Office of Habitat Conservation (OHC)* within the *National Marine Fisheries Service*. In this role, Gina develops policy guidance for Restoration Center programs and regions; responds to congressional inquiries on habitat restoration; and works closely with OHC leadership on stakeholder engagement. Gina has been at NOAA since 2015 and prior to joining the Restoration Center, she provided policy support on coastal resilience and ecosystem science for the National Ocean Service. Gina started her NOAA career supporting the Acting Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Management. She has also worked in the House of Representatives, Marine Technology Society, Consortium for Ocean Leadership, and various ocean conservation NGOs. Gina can be reached at Gina.Mason@noaa.gov.



Tom Bigford has been a Coastal Society member since 1976, when he was in graduate school at the University of Rhode Island. During his 44 years as a member he has served on the Board as Secretary, Director (3 terms), President, and the Society's first Executive Director (3 years). He edited the Society's *Bulletin* for 16 years, chaired the biennial conference in Boston in 1988, and edited the conference proceedings twice. Additionally, he has served for 19 years as the Society's representative on the editorial board of its official journal, *Coastal Management*. Since 2018 he has been an active member of the Society's Development Committee and its effort to launch "The Coastal Society's Margaret A. Davidson Coastal Career Development Program." The TCS Best Student Paper and Best Student Poster awards are named in his honor and for his commitment to the next generation of coastal practitioners.

Tom is retired from his first career (38 years) with the Environmental Protection Agency (3 years) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (35 years). Throughout his federal career he worked in coastal and marine environmental protection offices in Massachusetts, Washington state, and Washington, DC. After his federal retirement, he was hired by the American Fisheries Society to establish a Policy Program; he retired from that position after nearly 4 years in early 2018. He currently focuses his energies on TCS activities, as a recent past-President of the AFS Fish Habitat Section, and a member of the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation's Policy Committee.

Tom received his Bachelor's degree in Fish Biology from Michigan State University, a Master's of Science in Marine Ecology from the University of Rhode Island, and a Master's of Marine Affairs also from URI. He is an Adjunct Instructor at Michigan State. Tom can be reached at tebigford@gmail.com.



Curtis Bennett is currently the *Director of Equity & Community at the National Aquarium in Baltimore, Maryland* where he is responsible for developing long-lasting relationships with local residents and stakeholders, collaborating with them to develop environmental programs and projects that meet the needs of the community. He also makes sure that the organization integrates and applies principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice within its conservation mission. He began his career in environmental education and community engagement in 2003 as a naturalist at the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Curtis worked at the Delaware Nature Society before joining the Aquarium in August 2014. He is a member of several diversity, equity, inclusion and justice-focused committees and workgroups, including with the Association of Zoo and Aquariums, the Environmental Protection Agency Chesapeake Bay Program and the Choose Clean Water Coalition. He is a current board member for the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, serves on the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education Advisory Council, and was recognized with their Robert Finton Outdoor Educator of the Year Award in 2018. Curtis received a Young, Gifted & Green 40Under 40 Awardee in 2021, on behalf of Black Millennials 4 Flint, the Congressional Black Caucus Sponsoring Member Rep. Donald McEachin, Climate Action Campaign, Black Women's Health Imperative, Environmental Defense Fund and Climate Power. Most recently in 2022, he received the [Blooploop 50 Award](#) as a top influencer within zoo and aquarium organizations. He has a Bachelor of Science in environmental science and policy with a concentration in wildlife ecology and management from the University of Maryland, College Park, and a Master of Science in wildlife conservation from the University of Delaware. Curtis can be reached at Cbennett@aqua.org.



Alexie Rudman's background is in environmental social science and stakeholder engagement. She has both a B.A. in International Development from McGill University and a Master of Coastal Environmental Management from Duke University with a concentration in Community-Based Environmental Management. Throughout her career, she has worked in a variety of different sectors, from non-profits to county government, on a spectrum of socio-environmental problems. Most recently, her work has focused on coastal and marine environments. While at Duke University, she conducted ethnographic research among subsistence fishers to understand the social and cultural dimensions of fishing for food, and the value of coastal infrastructure in supporting fishers' access to a range of benefits. As an ORISE fellow at the US EPA, Alexie's research focused on the human dimensions of coastal water quality, where she conducted research on social factors influencing the adoption of nitrogen-reducing technologies to help inform decision-making. She also co-lead the communication and engagement process for a multi-sector project in Cape Cod focused on reducing nitrogen-loading to estuaries to meet water quality goals. She currently works in Barnstable County, Cape Cod, where she is coordinating and implementing a wastewater utility pilot designed to manage decentralized septic systems to meet environmental objectives. Having grown up playing in tidepools, fishing, surfing, and exploring Rhode Island's shoreline, she's always been passionate about the coastal environment and is grateful to be able to contribute to water quality protection through her work. Alexie can be reached at alexienrudman@gmail.com.



Allison Besch is the *Director of the Career and Professional Development Center, Student Services at Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment* and provides strategic direction for the Center. Her team manages career development for professional graduate students and executive education for environmental professionals. Her primary duties include managing client/alumni/employer relations, new program development, and coaching professional students in career exploration.

Allison has over 20 years of experience in science communication and educational program design, including work at National Geographic magazine, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and the North Carolina Maritime Museums. She has served on the Board of Directors of the North Carolina Coastal Federation for 10 years. Allison holds a BA in geology and environmental studies from Colgate University, and a Master of Environmental Management degree from Duke University. Allison can be reached at allison.besch@duke.edu.



Rachel Karasik joined the Nicholas Institute (now *Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment, & Sustainability*) as a *Policy Associate* in January 2019 and works for both Oceans and Coastal Policy and Ecosystem Services Programs. Rachel's work focuses on the global plastics policy landscape, socioeconomic outcomes of coastal restoration, equity in environmental management, and STEM outreach. Prior to joining the Nicholas Institute, she worked for the Environmental Defense Fund and the Nicholas School of the Environment, focusing on fisheries management. Rachel received her Master's degree in Environmental Management from Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment and her Bachelor's degree from New York University. Her Master's research was on seafood access in food deserts in North Carolina. View her full Nicholas Institute profile [here](#). Rachel can be reached at rachel.karasik@duke.edu.