



In partnership with the University of Rhode Island's TCS Student Chapter



Presents

The Margaret A. Davidson (MAD) Coastal Careers Workshop

April 9, 2025 · 9:30am - 1:30pm

URI Coastal Studies Institute - Weaver Auditorium (1 Greenhouse Rd, Kingston, RI 02881)

Combined Speaker Bios, Headshots, & Contact Information



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF
MARINE AFFAIRS



**Narragansett Bay
Research Reserve**

TCS Planning Team/Speakers



Samuel Filiaggi is a Master of Marine Affairs (MMA) candidate at the University of Rhode Island (URI). Sam is enrolled through URI's joint-degree program with Roger Williams University School of Law, where he graduated with his Juris Doctor. Sam also earned his Bachelor of Science in Marine Affairs from URI in 2019 with an Oceanography minor, including a formative semester with the Williams-Mystic Coastal & Ocean Studies Program. In 2022, Sam returned to school to blend his passions for environmental policy and social advocacy. To date, Sam has experience in coastal access and resilience, endangered species law, eviction defense, fisheries management, international ocean law, and offshore wind. Currently, Sam's major project towards his MMA will provide research to the Center for Indigenous Peoples Rights and Save The Bay to further the Pokanoket Tribe's land use planning. Sam enjoys being active in his communities, including serving as the President of URI's chapter of The Coastal Society. Sam thanks everyone attending this workshop and can be reached at sfiliaggi@uri.edu.



Shannon Howley is a Marine Affairs Ph.D. candidate and Research Assistant at the University of Rhode Island (URI). Her research explores the intersections of science communication and community engagement, with a focus on offshore wind energy. She has been a research assistant for multiple grant-funded projects at URI, researching communication, public engagement, and energy justice related to offshore wind. Currently, she is supporting a project investigating the impacts of offshore wind development in port-adjacent communities. Her dissertation explores offshore wind misinformation and disinformation. She also holds a Master of Arts in Communication from Wake Forest University and a Bachelor's in Government and International Politics from George Mason University. Shannon can be reached at shannon_howley@uri.edu.



Eva Pumo is a Master of Arts in Marine Affairs candidate at the University of Rhode Island. She is pursuing a graduate certificate in Coastal Resilience while at URI as well, due to her interests in coastal hazards and sea level rise. Eva obtained a Bachelor of Science in Environmental science with a minor in Public Health at the University of Delaware in 2024. While there, she completed two study abroad programs: a winter in Brisbane, Australia focused on the restoration and rehabilitation of mines and a semester in Copenhagen, Denmark, where Eva broadened her perspectives on sustainable development in Northern Europe. It was there where she found her passion for offshore wind, which is what her research is focused on in partnership with Lawrence Berkley National Labs. Eva has experience with research pertaining to disasters, renewable energy, vulnerable populations, and coastal locations through her time at different research institutions including the Coastal Hazards, Equity, Economic Prosperity, and Resilience (or CHEER) hub. Eva can be reached at evapumo@uri.edu.



Jeff Flood is a Senior Coastal Planner (II) with the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program (Virginia CZM) in Richmond, Virginia. In this capacity, he works w/ several state agencies as well as regional and local governments to administer enforceable policies that protect coastal resources and foster sustainable development in the coastal areas of the Commonwealth. His principal duties include program review, policy formulation, grant proposal writing & administration, and providing technical assistance to partner organizations where needed. More recently, Jeff has been assigned to leading or closely supporting stakeholder groups related to abandoned and derelict vessels (ADVs), ocean planning, and shoreline

management and has been tasked with writing proposals for nationally competitive NOAA funding. Jeff also provides subject matter expertise on shellfish aquaculture and coastal habitat restoration, acquired from undergraduate internships, graduate research, and his previous position with Wetland Studies & Solutions, an environmental consulting firm in Virginia Beach. Jeff holds a master's degree in marine policy from the University of Delaware and a Bachelor's of Science in marine biology from the University of North Carolina-Wilmington. Collectively, Jeff uses his interdisciplinary educational and professional background on a daily basis to work with both Federal and local government partners, bringing a unique perspective to TCS on how policy success stories at the local level can help inform state-wide and national initiatives. Jeff began his involvement in TCS as a senior in high school when he attended the 2006 conference in St. Pete Beach, Florida – the first of many TCS conferences he would go on to participate in. At that conference, Jeff administered a career survey which he had developed with the help of current Board member Tom Bigford, then working for NOAA. The survey results and advice from numerous mentors over the years have been instrumental in directing Jeff's coastal career path and he hopes to guide the development of the next generation of coastal professionals by helping to organize and participate in Margaret A. Davidson (MAD) career development workshops. Jeff served on the TCS Board of Directors from 2019 to 2023 and has served as co-chair of both the MAD Coastal Career Development Committee and the Development (Fundraising) Committee from January 2021 to July 2024. He is currently Chair of the MAD Committee. Jeff can be reached at jflood@udel.edu.



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.



Andrew Wilson is a partner with Milling Benson Woodward LLP and serves as both lead trial counsel and appellate counsel in all stages of federal and state civil litigation as well as in administrative proceedings before state and federal agencies. These matters include litigation related to personal injury and death claims; pipeline ruptures, failures and explosions; oil & gas well blow-outs; major environmental disasters; ship collisions, groundings and sinkings; insurance coverage and defense; yacht collisions, fires and damage; charter party disputes; natural resource damage claims; eminent domain matters including expropriation, inverse condemnation/"takings" and consequential damages; water bottom ownership; oilfield and environmental remediation matters; oyster leasing issues; and, numerous Louisiana coastal restoration issues. His most significant achievement to date involves the dismissal of claims of oyster lessees seeking billions of dollars in alleged damages to oyster leases against the State of Louisiana resulting from coastal restoration projects. He has served as a consultant to the State on coastal restoration issues, and has been involved with government relations such as permitting, drafting legislation and regulations, particularly with regard to oyster leasing, and has testified on several occasions before Louisiana Legislative Committees. He is also an External Advisory Board Member for the LSU Coastal Sustainability Studio. Andrew has a J.D. and an L.L.M in Energy & Environmental Law from Tulane University Law School. Andrew can be reached at awilson@millinglaw.com.

Speakers



Katy Robinson Hall is the staff attorney at Save The Bay, Rhode Island's leading non-profit ocean and coastal environmental advocacy organization. Katy has been practicing law for over 35 years, first as an environmental attorney and litigator at RI's Dept. of Environmental Management, and then in her own firm where she has practiced law related to climate change, environmental law, property rights, land use and conservation, coastal zone management, water law, water pollution, farm, forestry and open space, site remediation, civil rights, and municipal, state and federal regulatory land use permitting and enforcement. She has taught marine biodiversity law at Roger Williams School of Law, ocean and coastal marine policy and law at the University of Rhode Island, and for over 20 years at the Ocean and Coastal Studies Program of Williams College and Mystic Seaport. She collaborates with leaders of indigenous communities in coastal SE Louisiana working on legal issues relating to climate change, sea level rise, civil rights and environmental justice. Katy can be reached at khall@savebay.org.



Dr. Kyle McElroy is the Urban Resiliency Manager for the City of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. In this role, she leads initiatives to expand green infrastructure to reduce flooding and urban heat, advance the city's energy transition through efforts such as vehicle electrification, and secure state and federal grants to support these projects. She earned her Ph.D. in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island,

where her dissertation, *Navigating Flood Risk in Municipal Urban Planning: A Mental Model*, examined how municipal decision-makers and urban planners integrate flood risk management into urban policies under climate change. Her research explored the cognitive frameworks and perceptions shaping urban planning decisions and provided recommendations to strengthen municipal resiliency planning in other cities. With a background in coastal engineering design and marine construction, Kyle has worked on dredging projects with Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company, LLC, and on coastal engineering modeling and design in both the public sector (USACE Norfolk District) and private sector (Mott MacDonald Consultancy Group). She has also contributed to applied preparedness tools, including www.richamp.org. Kyle can be reached at kyle_mcelroy@uri.edu.



Aranzazu Lascurain arrived at NOAA's Office for Coastal Management in 2022. She carries out partnerships and regional coordination and implementation for OCM as the Southeast and Caribbean Regional Lead. This also includes identification of programmatic challenges, co-production of coastal conservation strategies, and coastal program evaluation. She formerly worked at the Southeast Climate Adaptation Science Center for 10 years out of NC State University where she focused on mentorship of the Global Change Fellows and devoted her time to partnership building and tribal engagement. She believes that listening to and elevating community voices is one of the best chances we have for successful climate adaptation. She has a B.A in Geography and Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley and an M.S. in Environmental Studies from University of Oregon. She is originally from central Mexico and is a native Spanish speaker. Her coasts include the Salish Sea, the Gulf of Mexico (near where she was born), the South Atlantic and the Rappahannock Estuary where she raises the eastern oyster for personal consumption and water quality benefits. She is based out of Raleigh, NC with an office in the NC State Climate Office and NOAA Carolina's CAP program. Aranzazu can be reached at aranzazu.lascurain@noaa.gov.



Dr. Catie Alves (she/her) is a mother, partner, community organizer, marine scientist, artist, and advocate. Dr. Alves is currently the South County Coastkeeper with Save The Bay, where she provides a visible on-the-water presence and works in the community to protect, restore, and promote stewardship of Little Narragansett Bay, the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed, and the South County Coast of RI. Dr. Alves has worked in Mexico, Belize and the northeast United States to combine social science with ecology to inform improved management of marine and coastal systems. She values connecting academics, natural resource managers and communities to achieve shared conservation and sustainability goals. She is a National Geographic Explorer, Co-Founder of the Northeast Climate-Resilience Fisheries Network, and a 2022 Fellow of New Leaders Council Rhode Island. Dr. Alves received her Ph.D. in ecology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her B.A. in biology from Connecticut College. Outside of work, Dr. Alves enjoys paddle-boarding, kayaking, crafting, gardening, and hiking with family and friends. Dr. Alves can be reached at calves@savebay.org.



Eva Touhey brought WasteNaut Consulting to life in March of 2024. Eva is a Rhode Island native, currently living in Newport on Aquidneck Island. She has over eight years of experience working in the nonprofit sector, most recently with Clean Ocean Access, cultivating and leading community initiatives that address ocean health issues. She received a Master of Arts in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island and a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Music from Hobart and William Smith Colleges.

Now, Eva uses her expertise in waste management and behavior change best practices to be a leader for environmental changes and solutions. Eva can be reached at info@wastenautri.com.



Saiontoni Sarkar is a Community Engagement Specialist with Rhode Island Sea Grant (RISG). Saiontoni comes to RISG with experience in stakeholder engagement & facilitation, project management, writing and editing, and qualitative research. She is interested in how coastal communities interact with marine and coastal resources. During her 8+ years supporting the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, Saiontoni managed communications projects, supported interagency work on Earth observations, led strategic planning to improve stakeholder relations, and provided executive staffing support to agency senior leadership. Saiontoni received a B.S. in Environmental Science and Biology with a Global Health Certificate from Duke University. She has a Master's in Marine Affairs from the University of Washington, where she evaluated lessons learned from a marine resource management initiative in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific, conducting social science research in the Solomon Islands. Saiontoni can be reached at saiontoni.sarkar@uri.edu.



Jennifer West has been the Training and Engagement Coordinator with the Narragansett Bay Research Reserve since 2005. In this position, she develops and delivers training events and technical assistance

programs for municipal officials and other decision-maker audiences on topics related to water quality, habitat protection, and climate change. Jennifer has expertise in program design, management, and evaluation; communicating science to diverse audiences; meeting facilitation; and planning and implementing collaborative methods for engaging stakeholders in successfully addressing environmental issues. She provides facilitation assistance to a variety of groups, from municipal advisory committees vetting and adopting new zoning ordinances to strategic planning for conservation groups. Prior to her position at the Reserve, Jennifer worked as an environmental educator for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, was a Marine and Environmental Teaching Fellow through URI's Office of Marine Programs, and held positions at RI Sea Grant/URI Coastal Resources Center and the Audubon Society of Rhode Island. Jennifer has a MS in Environmental Sciences from the University of Rhode Island and a BS in Environmental Biology from the State University of New York College at Oneonta. Jennifer can be reached at jennifer.west@dem.ri.gov.