

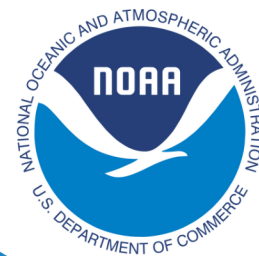
FEBRUARY 14 & 15, 2024

VOYAGE TO JUSTICE

**EQUITY &
CLIMATE
JUSTICE
FORUM**

PROGRAM BOOK

Silver Spring Civic Building
1 Veterans Pl
Silver Spring, MD 20910





THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION EQUITY COMMITMENT

As the Nation's premier agency for climate science and data, we recognize that the impacts of climate change are disproportionately felt by historically under-resourced communities and communities of color. We believe that equitable access to the most accurate and reliable climate data will serve to fortify and build climate resilience for all communities. NOAA is committed to ensuring access to and usability of our products, services, tools and resources for all people and communities. In so doing, NOAA will make equity central to every facet of our mission of science, service, and stewardship from our strategic priorities to our daily operations and practices.

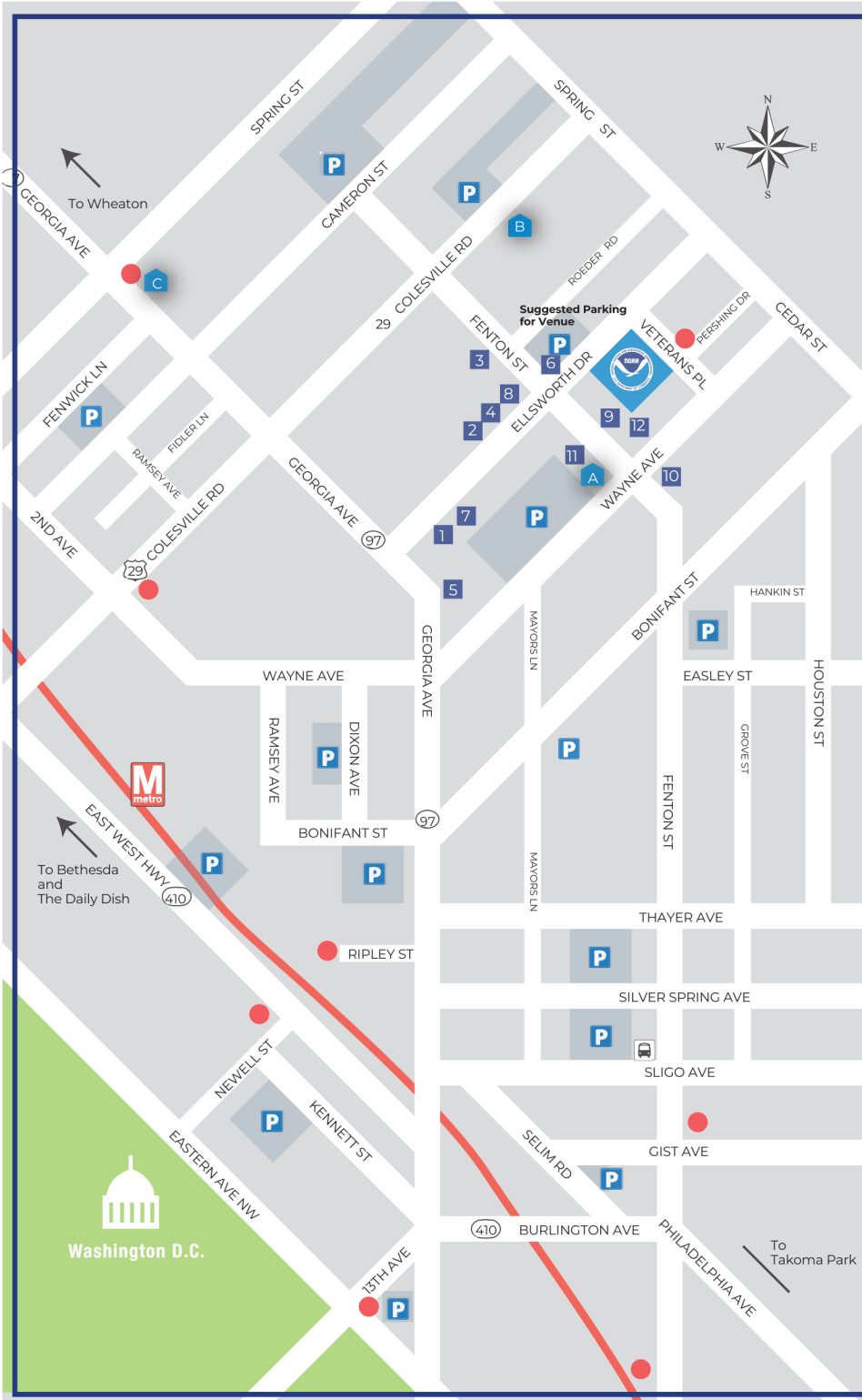
This commitment begins within our own organization. We welcome difficult conversations and continuous learning that make ours an inclusive and desirable workplace. Through critical examination of policies, processes, and practices that drive our internal culture and external engagements we will ensure that science, stewardship, and service are the ethos we live up to for all Americans.

To do this work well, we will build upon established progress and focus on developing authentic relationships through sustainable community engagement. We will honor local, traditional, and Indigenous knowledge, treaty and trust responsibilities to tribes, and center the needs of under-resourced communities. Finally in partnership, we will co-design, co-develop, and co-produce science and resources that address the unique needs of those communities to realize greater service equity



Voyage to Justice: Equity & Climate Justice Forum 2024

List of Hotel and Eatery Locations:
Downtown Silver Spring



LODGING

- A** Courtyard by Marriott
Silver Spring Downtown
8506 Fenton St. 301-589-4899
- B** Hotel Silver Spring
8727 Colesville Rd. (301) 589-5200
- C** DoubleTree by Hilton Silver Spring
8777 Georgia Ave. 301-589-0800

FEATURED RESTAURANTS

- 1** Copper Canyon Grill
928 Ellsworth Ave.
- 2** Starbucks
915 Ellsworth Dr.
- 3** All Set Restaurant & Bar
8630 Fenton Street, Plaza 5.
- 4** Matchbox
919 Ellsworth Dr
- 5** Sweetgreen
8517 Georgia Ave
- 6** Chick-fil-A
825 Ellsworth Dr Lot D1 - A
- 7** Nado's PERi-PERi
924 Ellsworth Dr
- 8** Chipotle
907 Ellsworth Dr
- 9** Cava
8515 Fenton St
- 10** & Pizza
8455 Fenton St
- 11** BurgerFi
8504 Fenton St
- 12** PLNT Burger
833 Wayne Ave

Event Location, Parking, & Transportation



Event Venue:
Silver Spring
Civic Building



Parking



**Capital Bike
Share Locations**

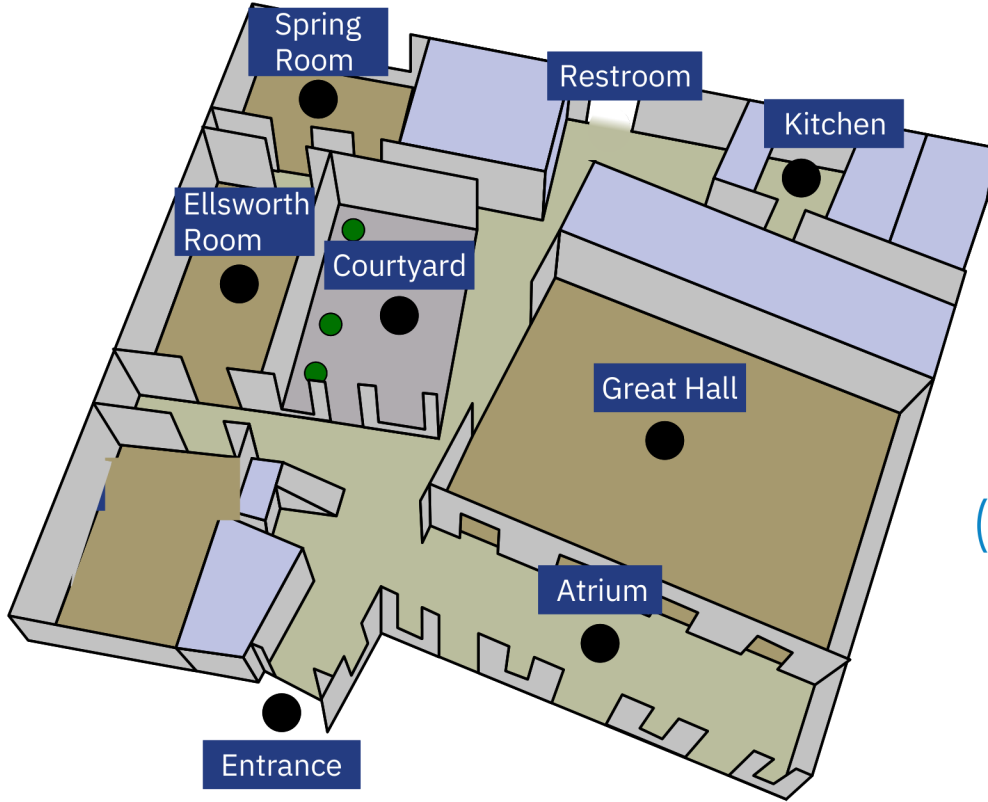


**Silver Spring
Metro Station**

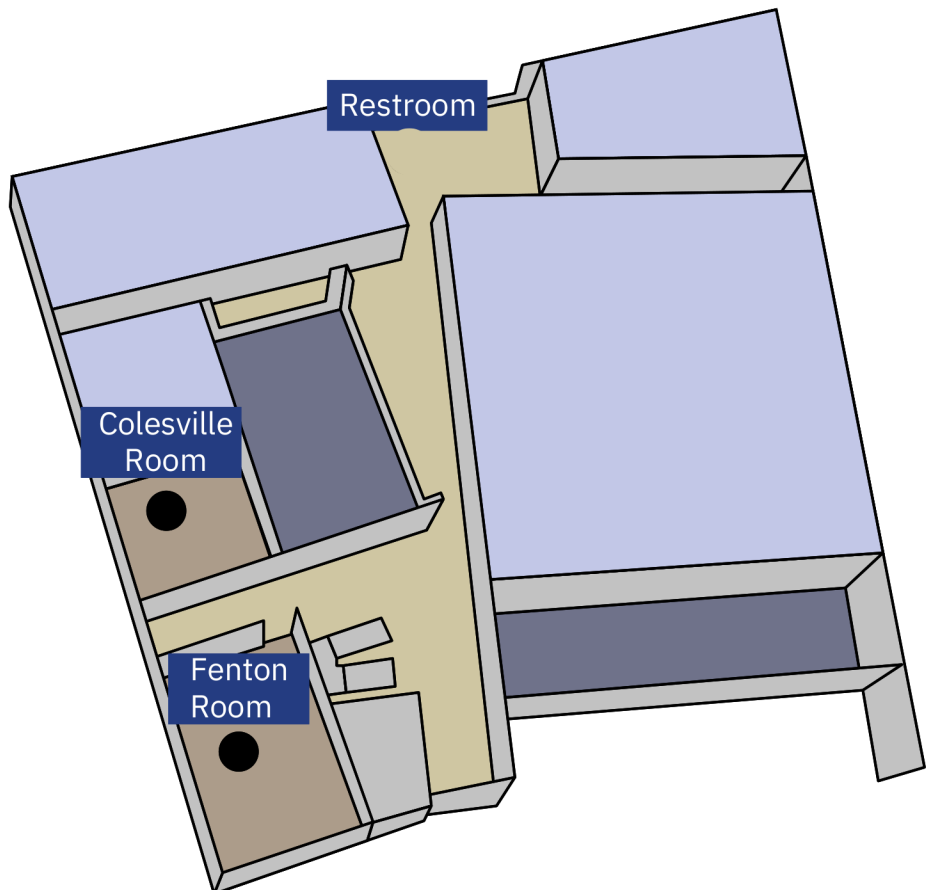


Voyage to Justice: Equity & Climate Justice Forum 2024

Silver Spring Civil Building Layout



First Floor
(Plaza Level)



Second Floor
(Upper Level)

REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED BY
OUR 2024 CO-SPONSOR



**National
Marine Sanctuary
Foundation**

DISCOVER WONDER



February 14 - 15, 2024

Silver Spring Civic Building
1 Veterans Pl, Silver Spring, MD 20910

February 14

- 9:00 am - 9:30 am** **Welcome & Opening Remarks**
Dr. Vankita Brown, NOAA Senior Advisor for Equity
Dr. Rick Spinrad, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere & NOAA Administrator
Mr. Don Graves, Deputy Secretary of Commerce
- 9:30 am - 10:45 am** **Keynote**
Ms. Colette Pichon Battle, Co-founder, Taproot Earth
- 10:45 am - 11:00 am** **Morning Break**
- 11:00 am - 12:00 pm** **Higher Ground: Restorative Science and Sustainability- Short Film Screening & Discussion**
- 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm** **Lunch Break (on your own)**
- 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm** **Using Language to Advance Justice and Equity in Conservation**
Next 100 Coalition: Ocean Equity Collective
- 2:00 pm - 2:15 pm** **Afternoon Break**
- 2:15 pm - 3:15 pm** **Breakout Sessions**
- 3:15 pm - 3:30 pm** **Break**
- 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm** **Breakout Sessions**

February 15

- 9:00 am - 9:05 am** **Day 2 Welcome/Overview**
- 9:05 am - 10:20 am** **Federal Engagement on Equity and Environmental Justice Panel**
Moderated by Dr. Jalonne L. White-Newsome, Federal Chief Environmental Justice Officer, White House Council on Environmental Quality
- 10:20 am - 10:30 am** **Morning Break**
- 10:30 am - 11:30 am** **Sense of Place in the Face of Climate Uncertainty**
- 11:30 am - 12:00 pm** **Community Cafe Introduction**
- 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm** **Lunch Break (on your own)**
- 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm** **Community Cafe (Breakout groups)**
- 2:30 pm - 2:45 pm** **Afternoon Break**
- 2:45 pm - 3:45 pm** **Keeping the Momentum: Next Steps for Advancing Equity and Climate Justice**
- 3:45 pm - 4:00 pm** **Closing Remarks**
Ms. Jainey Bavishi, Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere & Deputy NOAA Administrator



February 14, 2024

Silver Spring Civic Building
1 Veterans Pl, Silver Spring, MD 20910

BREAKOUT SESSION - AT A GLANCE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

2:15 PM - 3:15 PM

Nature for All: Building Equity into NOAA's Conservation and Restoration Work

Ellsworth Room

Promising Practices for Equitable Grantmaking

Fenton Room

Internal Capacity Building for Equity and Environmental Justice - A workshop program guide

Great Hall

Indigenous Knowledge is Not a Myth: A discussion about "IK" and why it is important to NOAA

Spring Room

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

3:30 PM - 4:30 PM

"Stories of Gullah Geechee People: The Necessity for Environmental & Climate Justice"

Spring Room

Using Education to Create Climate Resilience in Environmental Justice Communities

Ellsworth Room

RFI on Equitable Climate Service Delivery: Getting Climate Information into the Hands of People Who Need it

Great Hall

Youth Perspectives on Environmental Justice

Fenton Room

Understanding and Addressing Extreme Heat- NOAA's Role in Building Equitable Heat Resilience for the Nation

Colesville Room

WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

9:00 AM

Great Hall



DR. VANKITA BROWN (WELCOME)

NOAA Senior Advisor for Equity, NOAA Office of the Under Secretary

Vankita Brown, Ph.D., joined NOAA's Office of the Under Secretary on detail from the National Weather Service (NWS) and serves as a senior advisor for equity. Dr. Brown is responsible for providing strategic advice and direction to enable NOAA to align, integrate, and extend its equity and environmental justice work.



DR. RICHARD SPINRAD (REMARKS)

Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere & NOAA Administrator

Richard (Rick) W. Spinrad, Ph.D., was sworn in on June 22, 2021 as the under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and the 11th NOAA administrator. Dr. Spinrad is responsible for the strategic direction and oversight of the agency and its over 12,000 employees, including developing NOAA's portfolio of products and services to address the climate crisis, enhancing environmental sustainability and fostering economic development, and creating a more just, equitable, diverse and inclusive NOAA workforce.



MR. DON GRAVES (REMARKS)

Deputy Secretary of Commerce, Department of Commerce

Don Graves is the 19th Deputy Secretary of Commerce. Graves brings decades of experience in the private sector, government, and nonprofits to the Department of Commerce. Most recently, he served as Counselor to President Joe Biden during the 2020 presidential campaign. Prior to that, Graves served as Executive Vice President and Head of Corporate Responsibility and Community Relations at KeyBank.



MS. JAINEY BAVISHI (KEYNOTE INTRODUCTION)

Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere & Deputy NOAA Administrator

Jainey K. Bavishi is the assistant secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and deputy NOAA administrator. In this role Bavishi is responsible for providing agency-wide direction with regard to climate resilience, fisheries, coastal and ocean programs, including efforts related to NOAA's implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act.

OPENING KEYNOTE: BUILDING MOMENTUM TOWARD CLIMATE JUSTICE

9:30 AM - 10:45 AM

Great Hall

COLETTE PICHON BATTLE, ESQ.

Co-founder and Vision & Initiatives Partner, Taproot Earth



Colette Pichon Battle is an award-winning lawyer and climate justice organizer. She is a trusted voice in the climate justice and Black liberation movements, and her work focuses on creating spaces for frontline communities to gather and advance climate strategies that help us steward the water, energy, and land. A generational native of Bayou Liberty, Louisiana, she is a 2019 Obama Fellow and is the recipient of many prestigious awards, including the 2023 Heinz Award for the Environment, the 2022 Catalyst Award from Rachel's Network, and the 2022 William O. Douglas Award.

Colette is the co-founder and Vision & Initiatives Partner for Taproot Earth and is a former corporate lawyer. Internationally, Colette has gained recognition for her outstanding use of the legal and judicial process to achieve environmental goals. After 17 years of work leading the Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy's development of programming focused on equitable climate resilience in the Gulf South, in 2022, she expanded her vision into Taproot Earth, inspired by her learnings with GCCLP and movement partners across the South. When not working to save the world, you can find Colette spending her free time in rural Louisiana, amongst the land, waters, and people who have poured love and nourishment into her from birth.

HIGHER GROUND: RESTORATIVE SCIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

A Short Film Screening & Discussion

11:00 AM - 12:00PM

Great Hall

In this plenary, we will be screening "Higher Ground: Restorative Science and Sustainability", a film funded by NOAA Adaptation Sciences (AdSci) Program. This film follows researchers from Drexel University into the neighborhood of Eastwick in Philadelphia and the City of Camden as they engage with citizens and municipal leaders in the struggle to adapt to climate change.

After the film screening, we will be joined by Franco Montalto (Research Director of the Sustainable Water Resource Engineering Lab at Drexel University), Ted Pickett (Eastwick United CDC Board Chair) and Brenda Whitefield (Eastwick United CDC Secretary) for a panel discussion moderated by NOAA Climate Program Office Climate Adaptation Partnerships Program Manager Sean Bath.

USING LANGUAGE TO ADVANCE JUSTICE AND EQUITY IN CONSERVATION

Presented By: Next 100 Coalition, Ocean Equity Collective

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

Great Hall

Next 100 Coalition, Ocean Equity Collective



CHELA GARCIA IRLANDO

Director, Next 100 Coalition



JACKIE CURRY

Program Manager, Next 100 Coalition



JANE AU

Āina Momona



HELEN SMITH

Creation Justice Ministries



KARYN BIGELOW

Creation Justice Ministries



VAL SCHULL

GreenLatinos



MARITZA MENDOZA

GreenLatinos

During this 60-minute Using Language to Advance Justice and Equity in Conservation session, we'll discuss the historical environmental inequities that have prevented all communities from participating in environmental protection and conservation work – with people at the center – and those inequities that continue to impede the enjoyment of the ocean by all. Together, we'll explore the significance of using language to advance justice and equity in our collective ocean conservation efforts.

This session will be led by Ocean Equity Collective facilitation partners and will include a dedicated time with coalition leaders who will coach participants on how to apply the session's key language learnings in everyday work. This will include ways to promote opportunities for engagement, collaboration, and future partnerships with communities of color and other marginalized and historically excluded communities.

Session Facilitators



TAISHYA ADAMS

Mukuyu Collective



BETSY LÓPEZ-WAGNER

López-Wagner Strategies



MIDY APONTE-VARGAS

Civil Strategies

The Ocean Equity Collective is an affinity program of the Next 100 Coalition, composed of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color-led and serving organizations and individuals who are dedicated to ocean conservation, protection, and appreciation. Our mission is to foster the next generation of ocean stewardship while elevating and creating a community-centered sustainability movement where all people can access and cherish the ocean and its ecosystems

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

2:15 PM – 3:15 PM

Nature for All: Building Equity into NOAA’s Conservation and Restoration Work

Ellsworth Room



JOEL JOHNSON (MODERATOR)

President & CEO, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation



AYANA MELVAN

Director of Conservation Action, Aquarium Conservation Partnership



HERMINA GLASS-HILL

Senior Field Representative, Georgia, Oceana



KARYN BIGELOW

Co-Executive Director, Creation Justice Ministries



STEPHANIE BAILEISEN

Federal Water Policy Team Lead, The Nature Conservancy

How can we build inclusive processes -- particularly for those who have been excluded in the past --- to deliver the benefits of nature for all? This panel will share approaches learned from NOAA’s work in conservation and restoration from community, regional and national perspectives. We welcome the audience into a dialogue on key principles and approaches to integrate conservation, equity and culture to meet community needs in a changing climate.

Internal Capacity Building for Equity and Environmental Justice
- A workshop program guide

Great Hall



DANIKA KLEIBER, PHD

Fisheries Social Scientist, NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center



MICHELLE CHOW

Resource Management Specialist, NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office

This session will provide training and resources on how to develop an Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) training and implementation plan development program for your own office or region. An important component of long-term integration of EEJ is the development of staff understanding and capacity to advance EEJ. To meet this need the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) and Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC) jointly developed a workshop program that engaged leadership and staff from all divisions. The workshop program was designed to provide foundational training on EEJ, and identifying EEJ actions relevant to daily operations, strategic planning, and other aspects of NOAA Fisheries work.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

2:15 PM – 3:15 PM

Indigenous Knowledge is Not a Myth: A discussion about “IK” and why it is important to NOAA

Spring Room



ZACH PENNEY, PHD

Senior Advisor for Fisheries & Tribal Engagement, NOAA Office of the Under Secretary



CAROLINA BEHE

Cultural Resource Coordinator, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

NOAA’s mission to understand and predict our changing environment for future generations can be strengthened by Indigenous Knowledge (IK). While there is a growing appreciation for IK, federal agencies must understand what IK is, how to protect it, and how it can be used to inform federal decision-making. This session will provide insights into the foundations of IK, common barriers, experiences, and engage attendees on ways to move forward in NOAA.

Promising Practices for Equitable Grantmaking

Fenton Room



MAGGIE ALLEN (MODERATOR)

Climate & Health Program Policy Coordinator, NOAA Climate Program Office



LIZ MOUNTZ

Stewardship Division Operations Manager, NOAA Office for Coastal Management



MADDIE KENNEDY

NOAA Sea Grant National Fellowships Manager, Sea Grant



SEAN BATH

Climate Adaptation Partnerships Program Manager, NOAA Climate Program Office



BART MERRICK, PHD

Education Coordinator, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Habitat Conservation, Chesapeake Bay Office



JANINE HARRIS

Marine Habitat Resource Specialist, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Habitat Conservation, Restoration Center

In this panel we will demonstrate ongoing work to institutionalize equity across the grantmaking timeline. Through a “show and tell” we will highlight examples of how programs have developed and implemented innovations that seek to increase equitable access to grants.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Stories of Gullah Geechee People: The Necessity for Environmental & Climate Justice

Spring Room



VICTORIA SMALLS

President & CEO, Smalls Cultural Resources



HERMINA GLASS-HILL

Senior Field Representative, Georgia, Oceana

Victoria Smalls is a cultural heritage strategist of Gullah Geechee heritage. Hermina Glass-Hill is an ocean abolitionist and environmental justice activist. This panel session will describe the rich heritage of Gullah Geechee people and their deep connections to land and the ocean. It will also describe environmental and climate threats and solutions to protect Gullah Geechee coastal communities.

Using Education to Create Climate Resilience in Environmental Justice Communities

Ellsworth



JOHN MCLAUGHLIN (MODERATOR)

Education Program Manager, NOAA Environmental Literacy Program



ROBIN LEWIS

Director for Climate Equity, Interfaith Power and Light



ESTELLE MONTGOMERY, PHD

Executive Director, FH Fauntery Community Enrichment Center



MICHAELA RITZ

Environmental Educator, Solar One



BASIL ALUSBEE

Project Manager and Climate Hub Advocate, We Stay/Nos Quedamos

Since 2015, the [NOAA Environmental Literacy Program \(ELP\)](#) has offered grant competitions that are concentrated on community resilience education. The funded projects use approaches that are climate solutions-oriented, locally focused, and engage, educate, and empower children, youth, and adults to take action individually and collectively. Funded projects help communities develop the environmental literacy necessary to take actions that build resilience to extreme weather and climate change in ways that contribute to community health, social cohesion, and socio-economic equity. The most recent cohort of recipients, many of which are first-time federal grant recipients, includes organizations that are directly serving underserved and vulnerable communities. These grantees are using environmental justice approaches to create resilience in frontline communities, such as working with faith-based communities to create climate resilience leaders and creating solar installation work-based learning opportunities in public schools. In this session you will hear from representatives of four ELP-funded projects about approaches they have found effective for increasing resilience in communities through environmental literacy and how they are integrating NOAA assets and partners in the process.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

RFI on Equitable Climate Service Delivery: Getting Climate Information into the Hands of People Who Need it

Great Hall

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION



JAINEY BAVISHI (MODERATOR)

Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere & Deputy NOAA Administrator



ELLA CLARKE (PRESENTER)

Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere & Deputy NOAA Administrator



DAKOTA FISHER

Project Manager, Federal Emergency Management Agency



CHELSEA COMBEST-FRIEDMAN

Director, NOAA Climate Adaptation Partnerships, Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments



VAL SCHULL

Water Equity and Ocean Program Director, GreenLatinos



NICHOLAS BONARD

Branch Chief, Water Resources Protection and Mitigation Branch, DC Department of Energy and Environment

This breakout session will start with a short presentation on the results of NOAA's recent Request for Information on Equitable Climate Service Delivery, followed by a moderated panel discussion that shares stories and perspectives about what climate data, information, science, tools, and decision support communities need to prepare for, adapt, and thrive in the face of climate change - and how the Federal family can best support them. We seek to have a candid conversation about what it means to truly meet the needs of users of all disciplines and backgrounds, particularly historically underserved and Tribal and Indigenous communities, as they move forward with their climate adaptation and resilience planning and implementation. Rooted in NOAA's recent Request for Information on Equitable Climate Service Delivery and forthcoming Action Plan, the panel will highlight the challenges faced and opportunities presented in making climate services more accessible, inclusive, and capable of addressing complex and compounding hazards.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Understanding and Addressing Extreme Heat- NOAA's Role in Building Equitable Heat Resilience for the Nation

Colesville Room



MORGAN ZABOW

Community Heat and Health Information Coordinator, NOAA Climate Program Office



JUAN PABLO HURTADO

Visualization Lead, NOAA Science on a Sphere

Extreme heat has been one of the greatest weather-related causes of death in the U.S. for the past 30 years, and increasing summer temperatures put citizens at higher risk of heat related illness or death. While everyone is at risk of extreme heat, some groups are much more disproportionately affected by heat-related illness than others. For instance, some people may be at a higher risk of the effects of high heat as a result of age or poor health, or the lack of resources that enable them to adapt or recover, such as people experiencing homelessness, incarcerated people, low income communities, and much more.

This session will feature presentations on NOAA's role in addressing extreme heat across the nation, including a focus on the National Integrated Heat Health Information System, the Urban Heat Island Mapping Campaign Program and virtual reality experience, and NOAA's heat pilot projects. Throughout the presentations, there will be a focus on disproportionately impacted populations, and how these programs are working towards implementing equitable cooling solutions in communities across the nation.

Youth Perspectives on Environmental Justice

Fenton Room



**LAUREN GIBSON, PHD
(MODERATOR)**

*Advisor for Youth Engagement,
NOAA Office of the Under Secretary*



JEROME FOSTER II

*Co-Exec Director, Waic Up
Member, White House Environmental
Justice Advisory Council*



CESIA PEREZ

*Environmental Justice Academy
alum, Smithsonian Anacostia
Community Museum*



REAGAN RUSSELL

Undergraduate Junior, Howard University

This dialogue will center young peoples' work towards and priorities around environmental justice. The three youth panelists, in conversation with NOAA's advisor on youth engagement, will also explore how the federal government in general (and NOAA in particular) could better support youth efforts.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION

FEDERAL ENGAGEMENT ON EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15
9:00 AM – 10:20 AM

Great Hall



DR. JALONNE L. WHITE-NEWSOME

Federal Chief Environmental Justice Officer, White House Council on Environmental Quality



SHALANDA BAKER, LLM

Director of the Office of Economic Impact and Diversity, United States Department of Energy



MATTHEW TEJADA, PHD

Senior Vice President of Environmental Health, Natural Resources Defense Council



ARSENIO MATAKA, JD

Senior Advisor on Climate Change and Health Equity, United States Department of Health and Human Services



KRISTI PULLEN FEDINICK, PHD

Assistant Director of Environmental Justice Science and Technology, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

This plenary will feature opening remarks from White House Council on Environmental Quality Federal Chief Environmental Justice Officer, Dr. Jalonne White-Newsome. Followed by a panel discussion with currently and former federal equity and environmental justice leaders.

SENSE OF PLACE IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE UNCERTAINTY

An Open Discussion

10:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Great Hall

According to NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), in 2023, there were 28 confirmed weather/climate disaster events with losses exceeding \$1 billion each to affect United States. Overall, these events resulted in the displacement of thousands of people, and had significant economic effects on the areas impacted. In this plenary session, utilizing an open conversation format, we will invite discussion on the impact of weather/climate disaster on sense of place.

COMMUNITY CAFE INTRODUCTION

11:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Great Hall

COMMUNITY CAFE BREAKOUTS

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Multiple Locations

Join us for an enlightening session at our Community Café, where we provide a welcoming space for non-government entities to discuss topics that are vital to the work they do. This inclusive environment fosters open dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas among diverse voices within the community.

During this session, participants will have the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations on a wide range of topics, from conservation and environmental sustainability to local community development and beyond. Whether you're representing a grassroots organization, a non-profit, or a community initiative, your voice matters here. Our goal is to create a space where non-government entities can share their work, perspectives, and challenges with NOAA, and we can learn how to help. It is our hope that these organic, fluid and thought provoking discussions will inspire collective action and empower all of us to drive toward positive and sustainable change.

KEEPING THE MOMENTUM: NEXT STEPS FOR ADVANCING EQUITY AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

2:45 PM – 3:45 PM

Great Hall

BRITTANY KING, PHD

Environmental Justice Specialist/Program Manager, NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science

BRIANA YANCY

Marine Habitat Resource Specialist, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Habitat Conservation/HQ

CLOSING REMARKS

3:45 PM – 4:00 PM

Great Hall

MS. JAINEY BAVISHI

Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere & Deputy NOAA Administrator

SPEAKERS BIOS

Hermina Glass-Hill

Hermina Glass-Hill is an ocean abolitionist and serves as the senior field representative for Oceana in Georgia. A native of Atlanta, GA, she is also an award-winning historian and the founder of the Susie King Taylor Women's Institute & Ecology Center which amplifies the life and legacy of Georgia-born Gullah Geechee Susie King Taylor who escaped slavery and made an impact in GA, SC, and Boston, MA. Previously, she served as the administrator of the M.K. Pentecost Ecology Fund at Savannah Presbytery and as the environmental justice coastal liaison at Georgia Interfaith Power & Light. She attended Spelman College and Georgia State University. She holds Bachelor of Arts in History (African American Studies) and a Master of Arts in Heritage Preservation/Conservation. Recently, she earned a "Drum Major for Justice" Certificate of Public Theology from Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary. She lives in a small town south of Savannah, and she loves it!



Ayana Melvan

Ayana Melvan has just joined the Aquarium Conservation Partnership team as the new Director of Conservation Action where she is responsible for strategic partnerships, policy, and advocacy with a special focus on Ocean Justice and Equity. Ayana has led work with a racial equity lens using the collective impact approach locally and nationally for more than a decade.



Karyn Bigelow

Karyn is a Co-Executive Director of Creation Justice Ministries, and a board member of the Next 100. She served as a policy and research analyst at Bread for the World, focusing on the intersections of climate change, food security and racial equity. She is a steering committee member of the American Baptist Churches' Creation Justice Network. She earned her Master in Divinity from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, where she sat on the Board of Directors, and her undergraduate degree in social relations and policy from Michigan State University. She has a graduate diploma in Global Food Security with studies focused on food security and sustainability. Karyn is also a beekeeper in DC.



Stephanie Bailenson

Stephanie Bailenson is the US Federal Water Policy Team Lead for The Nature Conservancy addressing a wide array of ocean and coastal issues related to climate and conservation. Prior to TNC, Stephanie has served in legislative and executive branch positions at the state and federal levels. Starting off as a Knauss Sea Grant Fellow, she has served in the Senate, NOAA, the State of Florida, and the National Academy of Public Administration.



Michelle Chow

Michelle Chow works for the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office as a policy advisor for the Directorate. She has been passionate about advancing environmental justice since graduate school and has sought opportunities to work on EEJ issues throughout her career. She currently serves as the co-chair of the Pacific Islands Regional EEJ Workgroup with a large focus on developing the regional EEJ implementation plan.



Danika Kleiber

Danika Kleiber is a PIFSC social scientist with a background in gender studies and behavioral ecology. Her research includes social science and equity approaches to fisheries. From 2021-2023 Danika was a co-chair of the NMFS EEJ Working Group, focused on developing the Fisheries' national EEJ Strategy. For the last six months, Danika has been working with the Pacific Island Region EEJ Working Group to develop their regional implementation plan.



Maddie Kennedy

Maddie Kennedy (she/her) is the National Student Opportunities Manager for the National Sea Grant College program. She is responsible for the administration of the Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship and the NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowships as well as the facilitation of collaboration across NOAA Fellowships. She has extensive knowledge of the federal application process through her experience writing the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to reviewing application packages. As a leading member of the Sea Grant DEIJA Committee, she is interested in helping students jump-start their careers and has a passion for supporting diversity, inclusion, and belonging in STEM/STEAM. Prior to her current role, Kennedy was a Sea Grant Knauss Fellow in the National Sea Grant Office specializing in Disaster Preparedness and Resilience. Maddie earned her Master's degree in Coastal Ecology from The University of South Alabama and The Dauphin Island Sea Lab where she studied the relationship between winter waterfowl grazing and sea grass. She earned her BA from Ithaca College. In her spare time you can find Maddie outside with her two dogs--on the trails, on the water or out in the snow.



Victoria A. Smalls



Victoria A. Smalls, a Gullah Geechee native and dedicated servant leader from St. Helena Island, SC, currently holds the role of President & CEO at Smalls Cultural Resources. Focused on Gullah Geechee communities in the southeastern United States, Smalls Cultural Resources passionately advocates for climate, land, and ocean justice, as well as preserving Gullah Geechee heritage through its commitment to history, art, language, and culture. With a 20-year professional background, Victoria has served in impactful roles, including as a former federal Commissioner on the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission and Executive Director of the Gullah Geechee Corridor National Heritage Area. Her transformative influence extends to various organizations such as Beaufort County Schools, Penn Center National Historic Landmark District, International African American Museum, and the National Park Service. Devoted to community advocacy, Victoria actively engages in empowering initiatives, emphasizing education and cultural preservation. Recognized for her leadership, she has received prestigious awards such as The President's Lifetime Achievement Award

John McLaughlin

John McLaughlin (he/him) is an Education Program Manager with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Education. He serves as a program officer for the Environmental Literacy Program supporting projects that develop the collective environmental literacy necessary for communities to take actions that build resilience to extreme weather and climate change in ways that contribute to community health, social cohesion, and socio-economic equity. He also works to coordinate citizen and participatory science efforts across the agency. He co-chairs an interagency working group under the National Science and Technology Council focused on community science for environmental justice.



Michaela Ritz

Michaela Ritz (she/her), CTE Program Manager for Solar One, is a proud Bronx resident dedicated to cultivating people and the planet. In her 2.5 years at Solar One, she has reached a K-12 audience with curriculum that highlights engineering, sustainability, and renewable energy. In her current role, she works with high school students providing technical knowledge and hands-on skills related to solar installation and system design. With an undergraduate degree in Geosciences and a minor in Environmental Studies, Michaela enjoys learning various perspectives in the pursuit of intertwining lived experience with education, work, and play.



Estelle-Marie Montgomery

Dr. Montgomery (she/her) is an executive-level catalyst and strategic-operations specialist, lecturer, speaker, and writer. As Executive Director at the FH Fauntery Community Enrichment Center, she focuses on the expansion and positioning of this community-based organization as Washington DC's first Resilience Hub. She holds a BA in Psychology from Rollins College where she was a Martin Luther King Jr Scholar and a PhD from Washington University in Neuropsychology/Neuroscience where she was a Chancellor Fellow. Dr. Montgomery brings this expertise to her role as the Principal Investigator for the NOAA-funded Nothing Without Us project.



Robin Lewis

Robin Lewis (she/her) is an environmental justice activist and organizer with over ten years of experience helping others become more sustainable and inclusive. She is now the Director for Climate Equity at Interfaith Power and Light DMV, collaborating with Black churches on environmental justice advocacy and sustainable solutions while promoting community involvement in the environmental justice movement. She has worked on many campaigns about trash incineration, water quality, renewable energy, affordable housing, green jobs, and green space, among other things. She has a BA and MBA from Rutgers University and an MA in Sustainable Urban Planning from George Washington University.



Basil Alsubee

Basil Alsubee (he/him) is a teacher, writer, and documentary filmmaker currently serving as the Project Manager and Climate Hub Advocate at We Stay / Nos Quedamos. He draws from his background in community organizing and urban history to address the intersection of environmental justice and housing justice in the South Bronx through community ownership and youth empowerment models. In everything he does, Basil hopes to put into practice the potential of coalition-building across various histories and geographies.



Nicholas Bonard

Nicholas Bonard is the Chief of the Water Resources Protection and Mitigation Branch in the District of Columbia's Department of Energy & Environment. In this role he 1) helps the city and its most vulnerable residents become more resilient, and 2) protect floodplains, groundwater, wetlands, and rivers through construction permitting and regulation. Previously he worked at the National Capital Planning Commission on making federal government assets in the Washington, DC region more resilient to flooding and extreme weather.



Val Schull

Val Z. Schüll (elle | they/them) is the Water Equity and Ocean Program Director at GreenLatinos. In this role, they advocate for policies that champion equitable access and conservation of both fresh- and salt-water systems. Val is a first-generation Chicane raised in the Valle de San Joaquín of California. Their interest in water systems stemmed from growing up in a farmworker comunidad near the San Joaquín River. They hold a Ph.D. and M.S. in agricultural engineering from Purdue University and a B.S. double majoring in Biological Engineering and Natural Resources from Cornell University. They live on a small homestead and enjoy strength training and playing rugby.



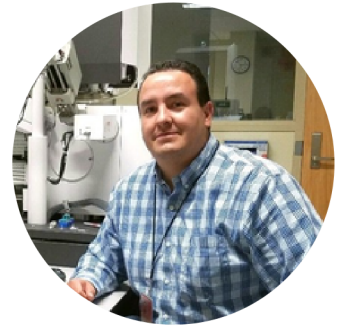
Morgan Zabow



Morgan Zabow (Zay-bow) is the Community Heat and Health Information Coordinator with NOAA's Climate Program Office. In this role, she co-leads an interagency heat communications team, which includes large scale federal social media campaigns and creating infographics and messaging for heat preparedness. She also leads NOAA's community science Urban Heat Island mapping campaigns, where she works with community members and organizations across the country and internationally to map the hottest parts of their communities in hopes of implementing solutions for those who are most disproportionately impacted by heat. Morgan has a Masters of Public Health in Environmental Health from Emory University, and a Bachelors of Science from the University of Georgia.

Juan Pablo Hurtado

Juan Pablo Hurtado was born in La Paz, Bolivia. He obtained his BS in Industrial Engineering from Universidad Mayor de San Simon and worked as a field engineer in the oil and gas industry. After moving to the US, he obtained his Master's degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Maryland, College Park, and began working as an electron microscopy trainer and operator. As a microscopy educator at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, he discovered his passion for education and science communication. Currently, he is the Visualization Lead for the Science On a Sphere program at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. His work revolves around using data to develop science educational products, facilitate outreach efforts, and improve accessibility for underserved audiences."



Lauren Gibson



Lauren Gibson, Ph.D., serves as the first-ever advisor on youth engagement to the NOAA administrator. In this role, she leads the agency's efforts to bring youth perspectives into agency decision-making while also working to smooth out NOAA career pathways for young professionals. She firmly believes that young people are some of NOAA's most important stakeholders and most powerful potential collaborators, both now and moving into the future. Prior to working with the administrator, Lauren worked in NOAA's Office of Education, starting in 2018 as a Knauss Marine Policy Fellow and then serving as a contractor focused on youth engagement, congressional outreach and communication until early 2023.

Reagan Russell

Reagan Russell is a Junior environmental studies major and English minor from Nassau, Bahamas. She is especially interested in the intersection between women's issues and sustainability. In the Summer of 2022, she was chosen as one of the Sharing the Power Foundation's Environmental Justice Fellows. As a fellow, she interned at Appalachian Voices, an Environmental Justice nonprofit. More recently, she interned at the Solar Energy Industries Association as a state affairs intern in the fall of 2023. While there, she focused on ways to encourage formerly incarcerated individuals to join the solar energy industry.



Jerome Foster II

Jerome Foster II is a passionate and visionary speaker, consultant, activist, and organizer who strives to create positive social and environmental change through art, technology, and policy. He is the youngest-ever White House Environmental Justice Advisory Councilmember, advising President Joe Biden and developing policies on climate change, environmental justice, federal sustainability, and other areas that affect the health and well-being of Americans and the planet. Jerome is also the Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of Waic Up, an international charity that mobilizes and empowers young people to vote, advocate, and take action on the most pressing issues of our time.



Cesia Perez

Cesia Perez is a senior at the Academy of Health Sciences at Prince George's Community College. Perez is vice president of her school's club for Latin students and has served the same role for her school's environmental club. She has interned at the National Institutes of Health and the Smithsonian's Environmental Justice Academy. Perez wants to pursue a career in healthcare or environmental sciences, aiming to close environmental and health disparities for minority populations. Through her actions, she intends to create opportunities in STEM for Hispanic and first generation students, believing that for STEM to serve everyone, it must include everyone.



Chela Garcia-Irlando

Chela received her B.A. in Ethnic Studies and International Affairs and Masters of the Environment in Planning and Community Engagement from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Chela has worked on several state and local campaigns, including running the successful campaign to elect former Assistant Majority Leader Serena Gonzales-Gutierrez to the Colorado House of Representatives in 2018. Chela was previously the Director of Conservation Programs at Hispanic Access Foundation, the Colorado Regional Coordinator at Latino Outdoors establishing the Colorado chapter, and an ambassador and founding leader of Brown Girls Climb. In her most recent role, Chela was the inaugural Executive Director of the Colorado Democratic Latino Caucus, supporting fourteen Latino state legislators in their efforts to represent and amplify Latino voices in the Colorado state legislature. Chela Garcia Irlando is the inaugural Executive Director of the Next 100 Coalition. She currently resides in Denver, Colorado with her family and enjoys climbing, hiking, and snowboarding.



Jackie Curry



Born and raised in Colorado, Jackie embarked on her professional career in natural resources, with her B.A. degree in Environmental Science from the University of Denver. Throughout her career, encompassing various nonprofit organizations across the Front Range region, Jackie's "boots on the ground" experience and hands-on approach have led her to manage ecological restoration projects and initiatives in collaboration with community members, federal agencies, and volunteers across Colorado. Some of her work involves post-wildfire restoration and wildfire mitigation, high alpine trail construction, outdoor youth leadership and stewardship, and collaboration with local affinity groups, among other activities. Transitioning from "boots on the ground" work, Jackie has now shifted her focus to policy and advocacy, bringing her unique perspective to the forefront. Notable, Jackie's leadership in developing and executing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives strives to establish a more representative depiction and ethos within the natural resources field. Currently, she is a Program Manager for Next 100 Coalition and serves on the Board of Directors of Mile High Youth Corps, contributing her leadership experience and prior service within AmeriCorps. Beyond her professional commitments, Jackie finds joy in hiking and camping, paddleboarding, and gardening.

Jane Au

Jane Lokomaika'ikeakua Au was raised on the shores of Māeaea, on the island of O'ahu. She obtained her BA and MA in Religion at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. In 2018 she successfully defended her Master's thesis on Kanaloa, the principle oceanic deity in Hawai'i, using rarely accessed Hawaiian Language resources and materials. She currently works as the program director for 'Āina Momona, a native Hawaiian nonprofit dedicated to achieving environmental health and sustainability through restoring social justice and de-occupying Hawaiian lands. Her goals are centered on food sovereignty, land back movements, and the revitalization of traditional Hawaiian natural resource management.



Helen Smith



As Policy Advocate, Helen leads Creation Justice Ministries' work advocating to better protect, restore, and rightly share God's lands and waters. In this work, Helen organizes faith leaders, creates policy resources, and works with partners to achieve meaningful policy change for God's planet and people. Prior to CJM, Helen worked for the National Religious Partnership for the Environment and was the preliminary editor for Journey to Transformation 2020 Lenten Study by Bishop Sharma D. Lewis. Helen has been an international volunteer building churches, schools and clinics. She has been active in the United Methodist Church throughout her life, serving as Chair of Trustees and a member of the Finance and Administrative Council, the Rappahannock River District Board of Connectional Ministries, and the Virginia Conference Communications Board. She is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University with a degree in International Relations. Helen brings the saying, "Think globally, act locally" to life. She has a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion lens in her work and centers a reciprocal relationship with God's creation in her personal theology.

Maritza Mendoza

Maritza Mendoza (she/her/ella) is a first generation mexican-american raised in the Piedmont region of NC. Her passion for our natural world started at an early age, from watching ants and snails in her driveway and playing soccer. She was fortunate enough to pursue her interests in school, obtaining her Bachelor's in Environmental Science from UNC-Chapel Hill and a Master's in Marine Resource Management from Oregon State University. She currently works at GreenLatinos eager to amplify the voices of our comunidades to shape water and ocean policies that allow us to thrive. When not tromping around outside, Maritza loves cooking large meals and discovering a myriad of artists and storytellers who connect and inspire us with our stories of joy, authenticity and true liberation.



Midy Aponte-Vargas



Midy's formative days involved helping build youth-led movements against the tobacco industry with Golin and then the American Legacy Foundation (now the Truth Initiative). Working at a crisis communication firm, The Walker Marchant Group, focused on litigation communication and diversity and inclusion efforts within Fortune 500 companies. And serving as the founding executive director of the American Latino Heritage Fund of the National Park Foundation at the behest of an Obama Administration Cabinet Member.

In 2023, Midy founded Civil to power nonprofit leaders and BIPOC-led businesses with trade secrets and know-how to build a solid infrastructure for their organization. One where leaders and owners can get work done, scale big, get noticed, and make the most impact

Betsy López-Wagner

Betsy López-Wagner launched López-Wagner Strategies, an Equitable Communications Agency®, in 2020 and serves as its founding principal. The award-winning multilingual team is stacked with visionaries, strategists and climate justice advocates. Betsy is co-chair of NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Business Advisory Council, a national 15-member council, and serves on the board of directors for the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

She has co-devised strategies alongside grassroots activists to ensure their power is seen, heard, and felt from regional to national and international levels by developing a culture of storytelling that elevates authentic personal narratives to emotionally connect with audiences and inspire action.

She's led strategic, bilingual and equitable communications initiatives on climate action, health and ocean justice throughout her career, including at the Packard Foundation, LCV, and Earthjustice, as well as alongside her López-Wagner Strategies colleagues in a successful advocacy campaign which stopped the California Coastal Commission's permitting of a dirty desalination plant, as facilitators for the Ocean Justice Forum in development of their federal policy platform, in authoring an award-winning environmental justice curriculum for EarthEcho educators, in ongoing strategic communications and counsel for Azul and Community Catalyst, and in advancing inclusive spaces and equitable partnership and grantmaking strategies for various organizations.

She's a storyteller, trainer, coach, and anti-racism practitioner with deep narrative change, science communications, and community organizing experience. She's partnered with Wonder Strategies and Goodwin Simon Strategic Research to support communications trainings on Heartwired to Love the Ocean, as well as Heartwired storytelling for reproductive rights in Latin America — an extension of her climate justice work — and has supported the Colorado Health Foundation, Fondation CHANEL and Namati alongside her Wonder colleagues.

She embraces her neurodivergence as her superpower. She's the parent of Liam the Lepidopterist, a youth moth and butterfly enthusiast and founder of Amigos for Monarchs. A transplant to West Michigan, together with her partner, they are growing a small sustainable farm.



Taishya Adams

Taishya (she/her) is a servant leader focused on collective liberation and stewardship through community building, personal transformation, and systems change. After 30+ years at the intersections of policy, education, health, workforce, and environment, Taishya founded the Mukuyu Collective, LLC to reimagine and align systems that balance the needs and wants of people and planet. The Collective works with government agencies, nonprofits, universities, and businesses to transform inequitable systems through policy and play.



Civically, Taishya serves the City of Boulder, Colorado as an elected City Councilmember. Taishya also serves on the board of Black in Marine Science. Previously, Taishya served as a commissioner to Colorado Parks and Wildlife; as the acting chair of the NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Business Advisory Council; on the Colorado Natural Areas Council, and as an inaugural member of the Boulder Police Oversight Panel.

Prior to the Mukuyu Collective, Taishya served as the National Policy & Education Director and Colorado Network lead for Outdoor Afro. Taishya also worked at American Institutes for Research as an Educational Equity Specialist and trainer; the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools providing technical assistance and trainings on school design, accountability systems, evaluation, and governance; the DC Public Charter School Board providing non-academic and academic oversight and training; and the Children Defense Fund Freedom Schools where she began her career at the Alex Haley Farm in 1995 serving communities through summer and after school enrichment.

Taishya is the founding Board President of New Legacy Charter School, a public charter high school and early learning center in Aurora, Colorado. Taishya holds a MA in International Education from George Washington University and a BA from Vassar College in Political Science and Film Production.

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THANK YOU!

TO ALL OF OUR AMAZING
VOLUNTEERS & ATTENDEES!

