Rhode Island Flood Mitigation Association 2026 Conference

Thursday, May 14th, 2026 | 8:00 am-5:00 pm

University of Rhode Island

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Camerin Bennett is an Environmental Policy Analyst and Project Manager with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) Division of Planning and Development. Camerin has over ten years of experience in planning, environmental policy, and climate resilience, and holds a Master's of Science degree in Environmental Policy from Oxford University. She served as Assistant Director of the Pawtucket Planning Department, previously worked as a Project Manager in environmental consulting, and also serves on the Board of the Rhode Island Flood Mitigation Association.

Kelly Phelan serves as a Conservation Project Manager with the RIDEM Division of Planning and Development through a contract with The Nature Conservancy. Kelly's role at RIDEM is primarily focused on assets managed by the Division of Fish and Wildlife, including several marine fishing and boating access sites in which coastal resilience is a prominent consideration. Prior to joining RIDEM in 2023, Kelly worked for many years as a municipal Conservation Planner for Braintree, MA. Kelly has successfully managed several complex projects, including public access improvements, salt marsh restoration and dam removal. Kelly holds an MS from Antioch New England and a BA from UMASS Amherst.

Jedd Andrew, Principal Civil Engineer, RIDEM Planning & Development
Jedd graduated from the University of Rhode Island in 2018 and has been with RIDEM Planning & Development since 2021. The majority of his projects have involved facility improvements and asset protection for the RIDEM Parks Division at Rhode Island State parks and beaches. Currently, Jedd is managing two major construction projects at Misquamicut State Beach in Westerly, and Roger Wheeler State Beach in Narragansett.

Ryan Brinton is geospatial and environmental scientist, holding a Master of Environmental Science and Management and a graduate certificate in GIS and Remote Sensing from URI. He specializes in applying GIS and remote sensing data as visual storytelling and problem-solving tools, using them across a variety of environmentally focused projects for NGOs and municipal, state, and federal governmental organizations. As a part of his graduate studies, he worked with RI Sea Grant and the RI CRMC, performing interdisciplinary research on environmental communication and short-term erosion control methods. Professionally, Ryan is an environmental consultant for Ramboll, where he works as a GIS and data analyst.

Emily Hall (she/her)is the Coastal Geologist for the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council and works to advance resilient shoreline systems. As a member of the professional staff, she manages permit review for living shorelines, dune restoration, and beach nourishment projects. Professional service has included membership on the RI Geographic Information System (RIGIS) Executive Committee, Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) Resiliency Subgroup, and RI House of Representatives Beach Erosion Commission. Previous research has combined sedimentological analyses and remote sensing techniques to investigate changes in geomorphology, carbon sequestration, and ecological community structure across coastal wetlands. She holds a MS in Geological Oceanography from URI.

Stefanie Covino (she/her) is the Executive Director of the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative, which serves to improve social and ecological resilience through capacity building and technical assistance in the bi-state watershed's 39 communities and many tribes. She has an MS in Environmental Science and Policy and a certificate in Diversity and Inclusion from Clark University. She is on the Steering Committee of the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program and Regional Conservation Partnership and she is a UMass Amherst Keystone Cooperator. Her interests include land use planning, natural resource protection, stormwater management, ecological restoration, and equitable nature-based solutions to reduce climate hazards and improve community resilience.

Emily Vogler is a landscape architect, environmental planner, and artist whose research, design, and teaching investigate the social-ecological systems surrounding water, sense of place, and climate uncertainty. Her current work examines irrigation ditches in New Mexico, aging dam infrastructure in New England, and coastal adaptation strategies in Narragansett Bay. Through research and design practice, she explores how the restoration and design of rivers and coastlines can build climate resilience, improve habitat, expand public access, and strengthen community identity and

stewardship. Vogler is an Associate Professor at the Rhode Island School of Design, where she teaches seminars and design studios on hydrological systems, urban ecology, landscape commons, community engagement, and material and site-based approaches to restoration. She is also the founder and principal of Commonplace Landscape and Planning. Prior to joining the faculty, she was a Senior Project Manager at Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates and a recipient of the 2010 National Olmsted Scholar Award.

Bruce (Star) Curliss is a proud citizen and tribal Council Member of the Hasanamisco Nipmuc Band. He serves as the Community Advocate for the Hasanamisco Band's "NukkoneMayash" (the old ways) and the Waterways Advocate. A lifelong learner, observer, writer, and public speaker, his approach is rooted in Eastern Woodland traditions, blending ancestral knowledge with modern expression. With over 35 years of experience in tribal governance, youth development, Public Policy, and Economic Initiatives, Bruce serves on several boards that benefit various causes, from youth programs to water protection, and is a strong advocate for Blue Mind, promoting the healing power of water. Bruce received the 2024 John H. Chafee Leadership Award from the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor for his work within the Blackstone Valley.

Jonas Procton, PE, As a senior Water Resources Engineer, Jonas has over seven years of professional experience focusing on river restoration, hydrologic/hydraulic modeling, watershed assessment, site design, stormwater management, low impact development, and green infrastructure. He has worked on a variety of projects related to dam removal, culvert replacement, watershed planning, and green stormwater infrastructure in various locations around Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Pacific Islands in Hawaii and American Samoa. He has experience collaborating with municipalities to develop projects from conceptualization through design, permitting, and installation.

Silvana Mercado is the Resiliency Manager at Rhode Island Commerce, the state's economic development agency. In this role, she leads initiatives that strengthen business resilience, foster innovation, and address climate challenges across Rhode Island. Her work includes advancing climate adaptation strategies through stakeholder engagement, cross-sector collaboration, project implementation, and strategic communications to support businesses and communities statewide.

Previously, Silvana served as a Policy and Budget Analyst for the Rhode Island Executive Office of Commerce, where she managed federal grant programs and conducted fiscal policy analysis. She earned her BA in Economics and Global Studies from Providence College. During her undergraduate studies, she participated in international service-learning experiences centered on sustainable economic development and supported nonprofit initiatives dedicated to advancing social and economic justice.

Alex Maxwell, PhD, CCP I help communities navigate the complexities of our changing environments and plan for more resilient futures by applying rigorous data analysis, context-specific planning strategies, and human-scale design principles. With a background in environmental science, engineering, and urban morphology, I bring a practical and research-backed perspective to environmental planning. I seek to identify and apply underlying patterns and transformational processes that make places more livable and resilient for years to come.

With over 13 years of experience, I serve as a project manager and senior environmental planner at Fuss & O'Neill, leading our Natural Resources and Environmental Planning team. Previously, I served as a Senior Manager of Climate Programs at Second Nature, taught courses in civil and environmental engineering as an Assistant Professor at Gonzaga University, and worked as an environmental planning consultant on several projects related to local climate action planning and sustainable urban design. Prior to joining the faculty at Gonzaga, I was a Fulbright-University of Strathclyde Research Scholar with the Urban Design Studies Unit in Glasgow, Scotland and worked for the Urban Planning and **Design Branch of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in Nairobi, Kenya.**

Caitlin Greeley is a Supervising Planner at the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning with more than 12 years of experience helping communities prepare for and respond to the challenges of climate change. She works with municipalities, nonprofits, and State agencies to create practical plans and partnerships that reduce risks, protect vital resources, and strengthen resilience. Her approach combines land use planning with climate science to develop clear, workable solutions that safeguard people, infrastructure, and the environment.

Katie Cretella, E.I.T. is a Water Resources Engineer in Fuss & O'Neill's Providence, Rhode Island office. She works on a variety of projects to reduce urban flooding, restore coastal and riverine environments and improve water quality. This often includes working with local municipalities and project partners to develop comprehensive solutions, encompassing

both green- and grey-infrastructure design. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering at the University of Rhode Island.

Rebecca Madsen, E.I.T, CFM, is a Water Resources Engineer in Fuss & O'Neill's Providence, Rhode Island office. She works on projects that enhance flood and climate resilience, restore coastal environments, and improve dam safety. Much of her flood resilience work requires FEMA Benefit-cost Analysis to evaluate how to best protect critical infrastructure as well as residential and non-residential buildings. She specializes in community resilience planning to secure funding for construction and implementation. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Ocean Engineering and a Master of Science in Civil Engineering at the University of Rhode Island.

Allie Pouliot, CFM is the 2024-2026 NOAA Digital Coast Fellow working with the Association of State Floodplain Managers and the Coastal States Organization. A Rhode Island native, Allie earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Master of Environmental Science and Management degree from the University of Rhode Island. Her coursework focused on coastal resilience, public engagement with science, and geographic information systems. In graduate school, Allie worked with local communities to implement a community-engaged monitoring app called MyCoast to identify flooding hotspots of concern. Now, Allie is leading a collaboration between ASFPM and CSO to update and create coastal-specific guidance and training for the No Adverse Impact philosophy, focusing first on the hazard identification and mapping section.

Kenneth J. Filarski , FAIA, LEED FELLOW, LEED AP BD+C, SITES AP, AICP, CFM, SAP+AEER, NCARB is the Principal and Founder of FILARSKI/ARCHITECTURE+PLANNING+RESEARCH, an integrated architecture and planning, ecology design studio/research workshop recognized with national, regional, and state awards. Holistic and multidisciplinary, Ken is a Fellow of the AIA and a LEED Fellow of the U.S. Green Building Council, one of the first SITES Accredited Professionals, an AICP Certified Planner, a Certified Flood Plain Manager, and nationally certified by the State of California Office of Emergency Services as a disaster assistance trainer and responder. An AIA Richard Upjohn Fellow and AIA-RI Morse-Stone Fellow, he served on the AIA Board of Directors, chaired four AIA Committees, and was elected three time President of AIA Rhode Island. Ken co-chaired the AIA's Disaster Assistance Committee, developing local/national AIA response to disaster events and COVID-19 pandemic. He co-authored/contributed to the AIA "Disaster Assistance Handbook", "Re-occupancy Assessment Tool", originated the AIA "Master the Disaster" board game and the AIA Resilient Resource Advisors supporting disaster stricken communities. A "Citizen Architect" he authored the renown RI Green Buildings Act (RIGL 37-24) and RI statutes for all disaster responders. President of the RI Architects & Engineers Emergency Response Task Force 7, honored with a national AIA Service Award for their work in Superstorm Sandy. He served on the ASCE 24-14, 24-24 Committees developing the "Flood Resistant Design and Construction" code standards.Ken Chairs the RI Green Buildings Act Committee; serves on the Advisory Board, RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council; Commissioner, RI State Building Code Standards Committee; Secretary of the Providence/Cranston Workforce Development Board; Vice-Chair, RI Ratepayers Advisory Board; RI Floodplain Managers Association Board; Cranston Zoning Board, State of RI Resilience Partner Group.

Wendy Nilsson, M.Ed, CPSI serves as Superintendent of the Providence Parks Department, a role she has held for more than 11 years. She oversees a diverse park system that includes 123 parks, the City's Forestry Division, municipal cemeteries, the downtown skating rink, and Roger Williams Park, home to the Botanical Center and the Museum of Natural History and Planetarium. Wendy leads interdisciplinary teams implementing climate-resilient park improvements that integrate stormwater mitigation, ecological restoration, and public recreation across Providence's urban landscape. She is also a founding member of the Urban Wildlife Partnership in Providence, which advances coexistence between wildlife and city residents. Wendy holds a master's degree focused on policy, and administration.

Kristin Andel is the Deputy Superintendent of Providence Parks and a registered landscape architect and planner with more than 20 years of experience working at the intersection of climate resilience, infrastructure, and design. Before joining Providence Parks, Kristin worked for the National Park Service leading climate adaptation strategies, waterfront resilience initiatives, and environmental reviews of major energy projects focused on protecting historic assets and cultural landscapes in vulnerable coastal settings. She takes a holistic approach to design, following projects from early concept through construction and into long-term stewardship. That framework informs how she navigates complex, multi-stakeholder challenges - bringing interagency coordination, public planning, and resilient design together in ways

that serve both communities and the landscapes that define them. Kristin is especially interested in the role parks and public open space can play in building community resilience as climate risk continues to grow.

Anja Ryan Duffy, PLA GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. | Senior Project Manager and lead landscape architect.
Anja Ryan Duffy is a Landscape Architect with over 19 years of professional experience. She is professionally registered in most New England states as well as New York state and leads a team of landscape architects and designers at GZA specializing in creating outdoor spaces that are accessible, aesthetically pleasing, and resilient to the effects of climate change and sea level rise. Anja's approach to landscape design stems from nature-based design philosophy, combined with an understanding of how people use and enjoy outdoor spaces resulting in ecological restorations, public parks, nature trails, and vibrant urban pedestrian spaces. She and her family, Michael, Donal, and Tobias, enjoy spending time in mountains, rivers, and coastlines of New England, and overseas with family in Germany.

Mark Pereira, PE joined the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC) as a Civil Engineer in April 2022. He holds a BS and MS in Civil Engineering from the University of New Haven and Purdue University, respectively. Mark also maintains professional engineering licenses in Rhode Island and Connecticut.
Prior to joining WRWC, Mark worked for two large engineering firms for 15 years. In his role, he worked closely with public, private and non-profit clients located throughout the northeast. His projects focused primarily on stormwater management, water quality improvement, and flood mitigation. Notable projects included a stormwater treatment facility for a 30-acre industrial operation, local and state stormwater design manuals, and small- and large-scale green infrastructure projects. Mark's work at the WRWC supports numerous river restoration and Greenway projects. His work spans all phases of these projects: feasibility and concepts, alternatives analysis, stakeholder coordination, existing conditions assessments, design, permitting, and construction.

Alicia Lehrer joined the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC) as Executive Director in March 2008. She holds a BA in Environmental Science from Columbia University and an MS in Natural Resources Science from the University of Rhode Island. Alicia's work at the WRWC has included spearheading migratory fish passage restoration at the first five dams on the river, working with partners to determine cleanup efforts of the Centredale Manor Superfund site, and leading Woonasquatucket River Greenway expansion, improvement and maintenance. Alicia helped establish WRWC's Watershed-Wide Flood Resilience Project, built organizational capacity to plan, build and maintain nature-based stormwater infrastructure throughout the Woonasquatucket Watershed, and created the Nuevas Voces (New Voices) and Campeones de Combate Climático (Climate Champions) leadership programs training more than 50 frontline resident leaders to direct climate resilience efforts for their neighborhoods.

Jarrod Holgate was born and raised in Providence, and graduated from URI with a degree in Environmental Science. He has worked in the industry initially with the National Parks Service, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and Greenpeace US. Most recently he has worked with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation helping develop the urban canopy of Worcester. Jarrod joined WRWC in early 2025 as the Stormwater Supervisor, happy to be working back in his home state and for RI environmental progress.

Derek Anderson, PE, WEDG leads Arup's Boston Civil+Water Engineering Team with over twenty years of experience delivering projects around Boston and across North America with a focus on flood resilience engineering, sustainable site and infrastructure design, and effective stakeholder engagement. He has a strong track record working in and leading engineering design teams on a wide variety of resilience, civil engineering, site development, and water management projects. Derek specializes in tailoring global engineering best practices to meet the site-specific needs of our local communities.

Chris Martin is the Director of Special Projects at the Providence Department of Planning and Development--focusing on long range strategic planning across multi-disciplinary teams in the City. He is passionate about green infrastructure, complete streets, placemaking/ placekeeping and making cities more accessible for all who experience them.

Honora Montano is a Principal Planner with the Providence Department of Planning and Development. Prior to joining the City of Providence, she worked on long-range resilience planning, mixed-use development review, and community engagement with the San Francisco Planning Department and the California Coastal Commission. Honora grew up in

southeastern MA and received master's degrees in public health and city planning from the University of California, Berkeley.

Derek Saari is the Assistant Director of the Westborough Department of Public Works, where he has worked since October 2019. Prior to this position, Derek served as the Westborough Conservation Director and the Assistant Town Planner since 2001. In addition, Derek was the Conservation Director for the Town of North Attleborough, prior to 2001. Derek earned a Master's Degree in Regional Planning with a concentration in Environmental Law & Policy, Bachelor's Degree in Urban Forestry, Associate's Degree of Science in Arboriculture and Park Management, and an Associate's in Building Construction Technology.

Kyle Grendell is a skilled municipal arborist with extensive experience in environmental operations, how they integrate with resiliency preparation, and storm response protocols. With a deep passion for urban forestry, Kyle has managed tree care, preservation, and planting programs, ensuring the health and safety of public green spaces. His background includes overseeing tree inventories, pest management, and maintenance projects while collaborating with planners and local communities to enhance the urban environment. Kyle's expertise extends to managing budgets, coordinating staff, and implementing sustainable practices that contribute to the long-term ecological health of municipal landscapes. Dedicated to promoting environmental stewardship, he works to improve green infrastructure, reduce urban heat islands, and increase biodiversity in public spaces. With a practical understanding of regulatory compliance and risk management, Kyle is committed to creating and maintaining safe, thriving urban ecosystems, while balancing the safety of local residents & critical infrastructure.

Greg Avenia, CFM Greg is a senior engineer and project manager with Kleinfelder, focused on stormwater management, green stormwater infrastructure, and water quality implementation.

Laura Wood, PE Laura has 8 years of experience in civil and water resources engineering with primary focus in the areas of site planning, utility design, and stormwater management. She is technically skilled in hydrologic and hydraulic analysis and has designed water quality and water quantity management systems, with a focus on green stormwater infrastructure, for projects across the northeast. Laura holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from Lafayette College and is registered as a Professional Engineer in the State of New Jersey.

J. Matthew Bellisle, P.E. (RI, MA, NH, NY) | Chief Operating Officer, Pare Corporation

1992 URI – BS Civil and Environmental Engineering
2001 URI – MS Civil and Environmental Engineering

I have been practicing geotechnical engineering for more than 30 years, with a special interest in dam engineering, although I am well versed in traditional geotechnical applications for standard and non-standard development, construction and ground improvement projects, as well as waterfront structures and resiliency.

I have completed and been responsible for the completion of:
- over 1,000 dam inspections
- design of repairs to more than 60 earthen, masonry, and concrete dams, and the design of new embankment dams
- the completion of risk assessments
- evaluation and design of dam removals
- Emergency Action Plan (EAP) development and training sessions for various municipalities in RI and MA
- emergency response during flooding events, and
- general consulting to assist dam owners in meeting regulatory requirements.

William J. Hunt Jr. CPCU, ARM, AIDA, AINS, CPIA is the owner and president of Shove Insurance, Inc., the oldest independent insurance agency in Rhode Island, originally founded in 1859. He graduated from the University of Rhode Island in 2006 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and has worked in the property and casualty insurance industry for over 15 years. William holds several professional designations, including Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU), Associate in Risk Management (ARM), Associate in Insurance Data Analytics (AIDA), Associate in General Insurance (AINS), and Certified Professional Insurance Agent (CPIA). His work focuses on risk management, coastal insurance challenges, and emerging InsurTech solutions. He has a particular interest in developing

innovative insurance and risk financing models, including parametric insurance and other data-driven approaches designed to improve disaster response and financial resilience.

Robert Megnia is the Senior Service Hydrologist, National Weather Service Boston/Norton. Robert is a native of southern New England and grew up in Marshfield, Massachusetts. He earned both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Meteorology from Plymouth State University in New Hampshire in 2013 and 2016 respectively. Rob began his National Weather Service career in 2016 at the Weather Forecast Office in Lake Charles, Louisiana, where he worked through several significant flooding events, including Hurricane Harvey and Tropical Storm Imelda. In August 2020, he transferred to the National Weather Service office in Boston/Norton, Massachusetts as a forecaster. In the fall of 2024, he was promoted to Senior Service Hydrologist, where he supported the office's hydrology program, flood operations, and partner decision support services.

James LeNoir is a U.S. Geological Survey, Hydrologist. James began his career with the USGS New England Water Science Center in September 2020. He primarily uses his ArcGIS and Python skills to assess current and estimated future flood risk.

Kyle McElroy, P.E, PhD is the Urban Resiliency Manager for the City of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. A licensed Professional Engineer with a Ph.D. in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island, she specializes in municipal flood risk management, green infrastructure implementation, and hazard mitigation and response.

Jamie-Lynn Ward Project Coordinator, Aquidneck Resilience
Jamie-Lynn is the Project Coordinator with Aquidneck Resilience and a NOAA Coastal Resilience Fellow. Her work supports the development and implementation of climate resilience projects, focused on water quality, coastal resilience, stormwater management, and habitat restoration through collaboration with the Island's municipalities, Naval Station Newport, and community organizations. She earned a B.S. in Marine Biology from the University of New Haven and a Master of Arts in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island. Through her work with the Charlestown Breachway Restoration and as a STEEP Trainee, she gained experience leading coastal resilience and science communications projects while supporting research initiatives in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

Paige Myatt Director of Resilience, Aquidneck Resilience
Paige is the Director of Climate Resilience for the Aquidneck Island Land Trust and leads the Aquidneck Resilience initiative, a collaboration between Newport, Middletown, Portsmouth, and Naval Station Newport, hosted at the Land Trust, supported by funding from NOAA. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering, and a Master's degree in Climate and Society. Previously the Aquidneck Island Regional Resilience Coordinator at the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank, she continues to work with Aquidneck Island municipalities and community partners to advance climate resilience projects across jurisdictional boundaries. She's grateful to call Aquidneck Island home for over 10 years and enjoys biking around the island.

Jamie Matthews Resilience & Sustainability Specialist, Aquidneck Resilience
Jamie is the Resilience & Sustainability Specialist with Aquidneck Resilience where develops and manages climate resilience projects around the island in collaboration with the three municipalities and the Navy and other local partners, primarily focused on stormwater management, water quality, habitat restoration and coastal resilience using nature-based solutions. She is the founder of the Jamestown Energy Project and is an 11th Hour Racing Ambassador. She has a B.A. in Biology from Connecticut College, and her previous work spans sustainability management for large sailing events to professional sailing.

Glennie LeBaron Community Engagement Manager, Aquidneck Resilience
Glennie is an aspiring curator of whimsy and interpersonal connection. A Brown University alum, she trained to pay close attention to the natural world while doing fieldwork across Maine, Alaska, and underwater in the Galapagos. Scientific findings are only as valuable as their ability to be integrated into social systems. Glennie has contributed to this translation work in the land trust world, with marine management entities, and more recently in the climate resilience space. While the climate resiliency coordinator on Block Island, she joined community members in freaking out about bluffs, dreaming

of a funeral for a beach house and sticking dune grass into the sand with students. On Aquidneck Island, she tries to cultivate vibrant interconnected systems with lots of tangles and redundancies.

Emma Polinsky Engagement Coordinator, Aquidneck Resilience
Emma is the Engagement Coordinator and a NOAA Coastal Resilience Fellow. Her work focuses on place-based engagement, climate communications, and community outreach. Emma earned her Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies from Yale College, concentrating in Environmental Policy with certificates in Advanced Spanish Language and Energy Studies. She has specific interests in climate change communications, environmental policy, and community-based solutions. Emma previously interned at the NOAA Climate Program Office, food justice non-profit Haven's Harvest, the Carbon Containment Lab, and the Yale Center for Business and the Environment. Moving to Newport from Florida, Emma enjoys being by the beach and spending time outside!