

Coastal Nature-based Solutions

Workshop at Docville Farm on Thursday, October 9, 2025

The German-American Nature-Based Solutions Exchange (GANBASE) provides stakeholders in the fields of nature conservation and environmental protection with the opportunity to exchange ideas on nature-based solutions (NbS) across the Atlantic.

GANBASE aims to exchange approaches and experiences; to present excellent research and lighthouse projects from Germany; to demonstrate the integration of NbS into local, regional, and national policy in Germany, as well as ideas on how these can be anchored in the USA; and to draw attention to the economic and socio-political aspects of NbS.

This takes place in the form of semi-annual visit programs, one per year in the USA and one in Germany, with individuals from each country invited as part of the core group. They travel together, and additional researchers and practitioners join the workshops.

This upcoming GANBASE workshop focuses on nature-based solutions in coastal environments. It is co-hosted by The Arlene and Joseph Meraux Foundation and POCACITO and takes place at the Docville Farm in Violet: 5128 E. St. Bernard Hwy., Violet, La 70092.

The workshop starts at 9:00 and finishes at 1:00 with lunch. Participants may join field trips afterwards.

The workshop is free to attend and open to all researchers, practitioners, and decision makers. The purpose is to compare research and practice from the United States and Germany and beyond.

Please let us know if you would like to present at the workshop and contact POCACITO with any questions regarding the workshop: max@pocacito.org

The project is supported by the Transatlantic Program of the Federal Republic of Germany, funded by the European Recovery Program (ERP) of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWE).

More about POCACITO and GANBASE can be found at: <https://www.pocacito.org/> and <https://www.pocacito.org/german-american-nature-based-solutions-exchange-ganbase/>

8:30	Networking coffee			
9:00	Welcome	Blaise Pezold	Welcome to the Docville Farm	The Arlene and Joseph Meraux Foundation
9:05	Opening	Max Gruenig	Introduction to GANBASE	POCACITO
9:10	Coastal NbS in Louisiana	Andrew Ferris	Challenges, approaches, and lessons from Germany	Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
		Corey Miller		Pontchartrain Conservancy
		Blaise Pezold		Meraux Foundation
9:30	Q&A			
9:45	Coast NbS in Germany	Luisa Rieth	Nature-based solutions to protect the German coasts	LKN.SH
		Alicia Wach		Kiel University
10:15	Q&A			
10:30	Coffee break			
10:45	NbS options in the built environment	Erika Boerr	NbS and its limits, grey, blue, green approaches in the US and Germany	City of New Orleans
		Ganbaatar Khurelbaatar		UFZ Leipzig
		John Supino		Boston College
		Amy Scaroni		Clemson University
11:45	Q&A			
12:00	NbS for biodiversity protection	Sierra Hildebrandt	Creating space for species, countering invasive species, and adapting to climate change	Old Dominion
		Frida Sánchez Luna		Ecology Project International; Teton Science Schools
12:30	Q&A			
12:45	Wrap Up	Max Gruenig		POCACITO
1:00	Lunch			

Speakers

Erika Boerr, Senior Project Manager, City of New Orleans, Stormwater and Green Infrastructure



Erika Boerr is currently employed as a Senior Project Manager in the Stormwater and Green Infrastructure Department of the City of New Orleans, and for the past 6 years has been focused on Stormwater Management projects. She has recently launched the construction of the largest flood mitigation project, both geographically and financially, in New Orleans.

Erika started her interest in Disaster Recovery work at Dillard University, where she worked as the FEMA/Capital Funding Analyst, managing their Hurricane Katrina Recovery Programs.

Erika's passion is to advocate for Project Management in all business disciplines. She strives to continue to work on Green Infrastructure, Nature-based Solutions, and Resilient projects for Climate Action worldwide.

Andrew Ferris, Native Plants Program Coordinator, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana



Andrew Ferris lives in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he works as the Native Plants Program Coordinator at the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana.

Sierra Hildebrandt, Old Dominion University



Sierra Hildebrandt is a Ph.D. candidate in the Ecological Sciences Program at Old Dominion University. As a member of Dr. Taylor Sloey's Wetland Plant and Restoration Lab, her research focuses on evaluating the efficacy of living shorelines as a shoreline management technique and restoration strategy. Her research combines field- and remote-sensing data to understanding how living shoreline designs can reduce erosion and sustain intertidal habitat. Before starting her Ph.D., Sierra received her M.S. in Biology with a concentration in Marine and Environmental Sciences from Hampton University in 2021. Her M.S. research focused on evaluating the efficacy of an alternative oyster production method for restoration and aquaculture. Sierra received her B.S. in Biology with a concentration in Marine Science from Old Dominion University in 2018. Sierra is a recipient of the prestigious Virginia Sea Grant Graduate Research Fellowship (2022-2024) and a former Marine Scientist with NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Sciences (2024-2025).

Ganbaatar Khurelbaatar, Systemic Environmental Biotechnology (SUBT), Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung - UFZ



Ganbaatar Khurelbaatar studied civil engineering at Mongolian University of Science and Technology in Darkhan. Shortly after graduation, he received a DAAD scholarship for his doctoral thesis at the Bauhaus University Weimar, in Germany. During his PhD, he worked on a technology that could withstand Mongolia's extremely harsh winters and would provide economic benefits. After he completed his PhD, he joined a team of researchers working on water-sensitive infrastructure planning (WASP) at the Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research in Leipzig, Germany. Within the WASP, he worked on the development of GIS-based decision support tool for wastewater management scenarios to determine the most cost-efficient solution. In the wake of climate change and ever-increasing urbanization, he is also working on planning methods for so-called blue-green infrastructure or nature-based solutions for urban water management. Overall, he has worked on a number of international projects in Germany, Spain, Denmark, Jordan, Oman, India, China and Mongolia.

Corey Miller, Community Engagement Director, Pontchartrain Conservancy



Corey Miller is the Community Engagement Director for Pontchartrain Conservancy (PC). A third-generation New Orleanian, he received his MA in Sociology at the University of New Orleans through an assistantship with their Center for Hazards Assessment, Response and Technology. He joins PC with more than a dozen years of experience working to improve coastal community resilience in the face of land loss, climate change, hurricanes, flooding, and a constantly changing environment. Throughout, he has focused on increased awareness through community outreach and improving ways that local knowledge and public input can

be garnered and incorporated into plans for coastal restoration, flood protection, and community adaptation.

Blaise Pezold, Coastal Program Director, The Meraux Foundation



Blaise Pezold is the Coastal and Environmental Program Director for the Arlene and Joseph Meraux Charitable Foundation. To advance the Foundation's mission to improve the quality of life in St. Bernard Parish, Blaise helps plan and execute the nonprofit's work to preserve, protect, and restore the area's natural environment, especially its vulnerable coast. His work includes field projects, strategic partnerships, community engagement, and public awareness. He liaises on coastal matters between nonprofit, government, and strategic partners. Blaise is a St. Bernard Coastal Zone Board member

and the Crescent Soil Water Conservation District Vice Chairman. Notably, he designed the \$29 million Bayou La Loutre Ridge and Marsh restoration, assisted in the design of the \$46 million Reggio Marsh Creation and Hydrological restoration, and designed the \$35 million Woodlake Marsh Creation and Terraces CWPPRA projects. Blaise was also instrumental in founding and partnering the Central Wetlands Reforestation collective, which will plant 30,000 trees and 33,000 plugs of marsh grass to restore wetland ecosystems in his community. He was the recipient of the Louisiana Association of Conservation District's Guy Caire award in 2022 and the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana's Coastal Stewardship Award in 2024. Learn more at www.merauxfoundation.org.

Luisa Rieth, LKN.SH



I'm the full-time project manager of the pilot project ECOHAL, which is part of the Interreg project MANABAS COAST. Since October 2023, I work as a project engineer at the Schleswig-Holstein State Agency for Coastal Defence, National Park and Marine Conservation (LKN.SH) and am responsible for the conceptual planning of possible nature-based solutions for the Halligen, as well as morphological and hydrological data analysis. I hold a Master of Science in Hydrology and have additional experience in conflict- and working groups mediation and moderation in citizen participation processes.

Frida Sánchez, Environmental Education Coordinator at ORGCAS, Field Instructor and Facilitator with Ecology Project International (EPI) and Teton Science Schools



Frida Sánchez is a marine biologist and environmental educator specializing in experiential, place-based learning and marine conservation. She holds an International Master of Science in Marine Biological Resources (IMBRSea) and a Biology degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. She currently serves as Environmental Education Coordinator at ORGCAS in Mexico and as a Field Instructor and Facilitator with Ecology Project International (EPI) and Teton Science Schools, where she leads citizen science projects and immersive environmental programs that connect youth, communities, and educators with coastal and marine ecosystems. Her research experience includes coral reef monitoring, fisheries adaptation to climate change, and biodiversity assessments in the Gulf of California, Madagascar, and the Mediterranean. A scientific diver and Women Divers Hall of Fame awardee, she bridges science and community action with a vision of cultivating intergenerational leadership and fostering sustainable relationships between people and the ocean.

Amy E. Scaroni, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Extension Specialist, Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation, Baruch Institute of Coastal Ecology and Forest Science, Clemson University



Amy Scaroni is an Assistant Professor of Watershed Management at Clemson University in South Carolina. She holds a dual appointment as a Water Resources Extension Specialist with Clemson Extension. Dr. Scaroni works in collaboration with coastal communities to identify and address sources of water pollution through research and education. She is particularly interested in the development and implementation of watershed plans, and the use of nature-based solutions to address water quality challenges.

John Supino, PhD Candidate, Boston College



I am a chemical oceanographer and wetland scientist interested in fundamental ecosystem processes and land-ocean-atmosphere dynamics at the coastal interface. My doctoral research uses marine carbon and oxygen biogeochemical cycling in tidal wetlands as a way to assess ecosystem metabolisms. I use autonomous biogeochemical sensors to measure a variety of parameters to assess how anthropogenic disturbance and climate change have altered tidal marshes, how they might change in the future, and how effective current climate mitigation and restoration techniques are in keeping blue carbon in place.

Alicia Wach, Kiel University



Having a background in environmental sciences, my focus shifted from natural sciences towards questions of responsibility and justice in my two masters programs on Environmental Ethics and Sustainability Science. Having studied in Lima, Lisbon, and Kiel, I am passionate about coastal regions and inter- as well as transdisciplinary knowledge transfer.

During my time at Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, I was able to broaden my view, connecting climate issues with migration, agriculture, and biodiversity with partner countries from three continents.

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Participants

Gerrit Meiners, INES-Solutions/Senckenberg



Gerrit is a deep-sea biologist with the INDEX project, using image-based methods to study hydrothermal-vent ecosystems along the Central Indian Ridge. His work assesses the diversity, distribution, and ecology of benthic megafauna to inform management of polymetallic sulfide resources. He develops photogrammetry workflows that convert video transects into georeferenced habitat maps and explores machine-learning tools to accelerate image classification. Passionate about improving cost-effective monitoring across marine systems, he aims to enhance global marine conservation through accessible imaging and AI tools.

Elizabeth Stoehr, Deputy Director, Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy



approaches to urban resilience.

Elizabeth Stoehr is the Deputy Director of the Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy in New York City, where she leads initiatives at the intersection of ecological restoration, climate resilience, and community engagement. Her work focuses on advancing nature-based solutions through hands-on implementation, long-term stewardship, and adaptive management of coastal systems. Elizabeth also supports the development and deployment of emerging nature technologies, working with researchers, startups, and innovation partners to pilot scalable, tech-enabled

Rina Lopez, Senior Environmental Policy Analyst, San Francisco Environment Department



I'm a Senior Environmental Policy Analyst at the San Francisco Environment Department, where I lead climate and energy initiatives focused on achieving carbon neutrality, advancing environmental justice, and building long-term community resilience. My work bridges technical policy analysis with public engagement to shape innovative strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions while centering equity.

With over a decade of experience in environmental policy, I specialize in developing programs that accelerate building

electrification, phase out high-impact refrigerants, and expand access to clean energy solutions. I've worked closely with city agencies, community-based organizations, utilities, and state partners to design policies that are not only effective, but also inclusive and responsive to the needs of frontline communities.

I'm passionate about systems-level change, and I approach my work with a commitment to collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and climate justice. Whether developing incentive structures, evaluating emissions impacts, or crafting new legislative pathways, I believe thoughtful policy can be a powerful tool for environmental transformation.

Shri Verrill, Owner, Principal, Sunrise Ecologic



Shri Verrill works at the intersection of ecological restoration, nature-based solutions, and economic democracy, advancing projects that strengthen both ecosystems and communities. With a background in salt marsh biology and coastal infrastructure adaptation, Shri brings scientific expertise and collaborative leadership to initiatives that address climate resilience while fostering equitable, community-driven decision-making.

Wendy Chávez-Páez, University of Bonn



Wendy Chávez-Páez is an economist (Polytechnic School of Guayaquil, Ecuador) and holds a master's degree in public administration (New York, USA) and a master's degree in human settlements (KU Leuven, Belgium). She is a junior researcher and PhD student in Cultural and Political Change at the Center for Development Research of the University of Bonn. She has worked in the Ecuadorian academia, government sector, and civil society organizations. She is a founder member of the Observatory of Public Policy of Guayaquil. She also performs voluntarily as the Academic Coordinator of the local organization Fundación Cerro

Verde, which works actively with ancestral communities of the Gulf of Guayaquil to conserve the mangrove ecosystem.

topic:

Socio-Ecological Conflicts and the Challenges of Climate Change Case Study: Cerrito Los Morreños, Gulf of Guayaquil

Workshop participants

Jonitha Boles-Davis, Urban Water Project Control Specialist, City of New Orleans

Ashe Burke, Wetland Activist

Trey Carswell, Owner at Moon'k Films Devoted

Dr. Angela M Chalk, Founder and Executive Director of Healthy Community Services

Donnie Davidson, Science Policy Research Fellow, National Wildlife Federation

Cori Gavin, Senior Project Manager, Eco-Restore

Marguerite Green, Statewide Director, Louisiana Food Policy Action Council

Christopher Lang, project manager for the City of New Orleans' Department of Stormwater and Green Infrastructure

Thomas McGinnis, formerly with Jefferson Parish Public School System

Will Reinhardt, landscape architect, Native Plant Lab

Alisha Renfro, coastal scientist, National Wildlife Federation

Jacqueline Richard, Director Coastal Studies and GIS Program Manager and Associate Professor, Nunez Community College

Jens Rummmler, Sycamore Sustainable Services

Mark Schexnayder, Senior Vice President, Coastal Environments Inc.

Erin Schott, Student at Southeastern Louisiana University

Dominique Seibert, Assistant Extension Fisheries Agent, LSU Ag Center

Bonnie Slaton, Graduate Research Assistant University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Hayley White, Education Manager, Pontchartrain Conservancy