



# 2021 SOUTHWEST FLORIDA CLIMATE SUMMIT

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

### **OMAR ABDUL-AZIZ**

Dr. Omar Abdul-Aziz is an Associate Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at West Virginia University and has conducted climate-related research in South Florida. Omar's research emphasizes environmental sustainability and resilient communities, focusing on ecosystem greenhouse gas fluxes and carbon dynamics, stream water quality and ecosystem health, and freshwater flooding in complex urban, natural, and coastal environments. He serves as the Chair of American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) EWRI's Wetland Hydrology Technical Committee, member on the ASCE EWRI's Surface Water Hydrology Technical Committee, member on the AGU's Water Quality Technical Committee, and Associate Editor for the ASCE Journal of Hydrologic Engineering and for the Sustainability journal.

### **SARA AYERS-RIGSBY**

Sara Ayers-Rigsby is the Director of the Southeast/Southwest Regions Florida Public Archaeology Networks and specializes in cultural resources management and historic preservation. As the Director for the Florida Public Archaeology Network's Southeast/Southwest Regions, Ayers-Rigsby is responsible for designing educational outreach and programming for Florida's southernmost 9 counties. Prior, she spent 10 years working as an archaeologist throughout the United States, with a regional focus on the archaeology of the southeast and Mid Atlantic. She earned her M.A. in Archaeology for Screen Media from the University of Bristol, UK, and her B.A. in Classical Archaeology from Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland. She is certified as a member of the Register of Professional Archaeologists (RPA).

## WESLEY BROOKS

Dr. Wesley Brooks is a native of Miami and serves as Florida's Chief Resilience Officer, working on behalf of Governor DeSantis to enhance agency coordination and bolster flood resilience and mitigation efforts in coastal and inland communities across the state. He is also an appointed state representative to the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Working Group. Wes earned a Ph.D. in Ecological Science from Rutgers University and Bachelor's degrees in Biology and Political Science from Duke University. He has co-authored 18 peer-reviewed scientific papers with a primary research focus on invasive species and restoration ecology in South Florida. Previously, Wes was the Director of Federal Affairs for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and has also served as a senior advisor to Senator Marco Rubio, Congressman Brian Mast, and Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

## CLAUDIA BROWN

Claudia Brown is a health scientist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Climate and Health Program, which is the national leader in empowering communities to protect human health from a changing climate. Claudia's work focuses on understanding the human health effects of a climate change, communities disproportionately impacts, climate adaptation strategies, and data and tool development to increase capacity to prepare for and respond to the effects of the climate change. She serves a member of the USGCRP Climate Change and Human Health Working Group, co-author for the Southeast chapter of the Fifth National Climate Assessment, technical monitor to the Council for State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) Climate, Health, and Equity Subcommittee, and member of the National Tribal Resilience Data Workgroup.

## JOSH DASKIN

Dr. Josh Daskin is the Director of Conservation at the Archbold Biological Station. The Archbold Biological Station consists of 8,840 acres of rare Florida scrub, wetland, grassland, and flatwoods habitat. As Director of Conservation, Daskin is responsible for enhancing collaboration and application of Archbold and partner science for regional and local land protection, as well as leading Archbold engagement as a voice for conservation science in the protection of the Florida Wildlife Corridor. Prior, he worked at the USFWS Division of Conservation and Classification, leading assessments of the conservation status of foreign species being considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act. He earned his B.S. in Biology and Environmental Studies from Brandeis University, M.S. in Zoology from James Cook University in Australia, and PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Princeton University.

## **ERIN L. DEADY**

Erin L. Deady, P.A. runs a full service legal and consulting firm and is a licensed attorney in Florida, a certified land planner by the American Institute of Certified Planners (“AICP”) and a LEED AP. Ms. Deady's practice is primarily focused on public sector government representation but also includes numerous private sector and agricultural clients. Ms. Deady's practice includes environmental restoration initiatives, water, energy, climate, local government, administrative law and land use issues. Ms. Deady's experience includes litigation, public finance, special purpose governmental representation and creation and land use planning. Erin is a frequent lecturer and author on climate change, energy, environmental restoration and public finance issues statewide and nationally.

## **MARK ELSNER**

Mark Elsner is the Bureau Chief of the South Florida Water Management District's Water Supply Bureau. His responsibilities include development and implementation of regional water supply plans, facilitation and coordination of development of conservation and alternative water supply development including water reuse, local government planning, the District's cooperative funding program, and resource evaluation including groundwater modeling and groundwater monitoring and technical analysis. He has been with District for 31 years and involved in water resource management in south Florida for over 35 years. He is a registered Professional Engineer in the State of Florida.

## **JASON ENGLE**

Jason Engle is Chief of the Water Resources Engineering Branch, Jacksonville District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Branch consists of a diverse staff of engineers who perform a wide variety of hydraulic, hydrologic, water management and coastal engineering analyses that support the study, design, construction, and operation of Federal civil works projects that provide coastal storm risk management, inland flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, navigation, water supply, and recreation benefits. This work is performed over a region that includes Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Mr. Engle has a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and a Master of Science in Coastal and Oceanographic Engineering, both from University of Florida, and is a Registered Professional Engineer in the state of Florida.

## **NIKKI FRIED**

Nikki Fried, Florida's 12th Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, is a lifelong Floridian, attorney and passionate activist. Born and raised in Miami, Commissioner Fried graduated from the University of Florida, where she received her bachelor's, master's and juris doctor degrees. While at the University of Florida, she served as student body president – the first woman to hold the position in nearly two decades. As an attorney, she was head of the

Felony Division at the Alachua County Public Defender's Office and worked in private practice in South Florida, defending homeowners during the 2007-2008 housing crisis. Prior to being elected, Fried worked at law firms as a government consultant, advocating on behalf of clients before the Florida Legislature. In 2017, she formed her own firm to advocate for at-risk children, the Broward County School Board, and for patient access to medical marijuana.

## **JANE GILBERT**

As Miami-Dade County's first Chief Heat Officer, Ms. Gilbert works across departments and partners to address the increasing risks to human health, lives and livelihoods associated with extreme heat. Prior to joining the County, Ms. Gilbert served as the City of Miami's first Chief Resilience Officer for four years. As CRO, Ms. Gilbert led the climate and urban resilience strategy development and implementation for the City of Miami, and, in partnership with Miami-Dade County and City of Miami Beach, for the greater Miami region. Prior to public service, Ms. Gilbert led 3 nonprofits and managed ESG work for large corporations. Ms. Gilbert holds a BA in Environmental Science from Barnard College and MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

## **JENNIFER HECKER**

Jennifer Hecker is the Executive Director of the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership, responsible for working with diverse stakeholders to restore and protect water and wildlife habitat in Central and Southwest Florida. She serves as a Science Advisory Committee member to the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, as well as the Chair of the Environmental Advisory Committee for the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Prior to joining CHNEP, Jennifer was the Director of Natural Resource Policy for the Conservancy of Southwest Florida for 13 years, as well as an environmental scientist for government and the private sector. She holds an undergraduate degree in Environmental Science as well as a graduate degree in Tropical Biology and Conservation, and has served on many boards including the Everglades Coalition and the national Great Waters Coalition.

## **JILL HORWITZ**

Jill Horwitz has been guiding South Florida communities in climate resilience planning for over 15 years. Her accomplishments include winning the National Planning Excellence Award for Environmental Planning by the American Planning Association, achieving the first 4-STAR Community Sustainability Rating by a county government in U.S.A., and building a peer-exchange network of over 500 local sustainability professionals. Jill currently serves as the Climate Resiliency Officer for The Seminole Tribe of Florida. As the CRO, she coordinates climate change related research, engages with the Tribal community, and provide recommendations on how to protect the Tribe's assets and build greater resilience community-

wide. She holds a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from FAU, a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science from U.F., and is LEED-GA accredited.

## NICOLE IADEVAIA

Nicole Iadevaia currently serves as the Research & Outreach Manager of the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP). This role oversees CHNEP's work on research and restoration project management as well as public engagement to protect water resources and habitat in Central and Southwest Florida and serves as the staff liaison to the CHNEP Technical and Citizens Advisory Committees. Nicole has degrees in ecology and biological anthropology from the University of Colorado at Boulder and a background in research science, serving as a principal investigator for the Florida Wildlife Research Institute – Fisheries Independent Monitoring and smalltooth sawfish research programs. Her experience in water quality includes project management, data collection and analysis for several surface water quality projects, including stormwater and seagrass monitoring for the EPA NPDES program.

## JENNIFER JURADO

Dr. Jennifer Jurado is the Chief Resilience Officer and Deputy Director of the Resilient Environment Department in Broward County. As such, she is responsible for the leading climate resilience and environmental planning initiatives for Broward County, FL. Areas of particular focus include sea level rise adaptation, sustainable water resource management, shoreline protection, coastal resource conservation, and clean energy strategies. She works extensively with internal and regional stakeholders to advance county-wide resilience needs and has been a participant in the four-county Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact since its formation in 2009. She serves on the board of directors for the American Society of Adaptation Professionals and the American Geophysical Union's Thriving Earth Exchange. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Miami in Marine Biology and Fisheries.

## KARA LEFEVRE

Dr. Kara Lefevre is a conservation biologist and science educator who studies human impacts on avian biodiversity and ecology, as serves as a Department Chair of Florida Gulf Coast University's Water School. She has conducted field research in arctic, temperate, and tropical ecosystems. Kara received her PhD in ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Toronto, studying rainforest birds of Tobago in the West Indies. Like the birds she and her students monitor she is an annual migrant, from her home in the Great Lakes of Ontario to subtropical Florida's Gulf of Mexico coast.

## CAROLINA MARAN

Dr. Carolina Maran, P.E. is the District Resilience Officer with South Florida Water Management District. In her role, she is responsible for advancing the District's resilience planning and projects. Carolina has nearly 20 years of experience working on water resources planning, management, and regulation; water and climate resiliency; water allocation rules and conflict resolution; hydrologic and hydraulic modeling, decision support systems and GIS. Prior to joining SFWMD, Carolina was the Water Manager at Broward County, worked over 10 years as a Water Resources Specialist for the Federal Water Agency in Brazil, and collaborated with International Organizations as part of technical consulting teams. She holds a Ph.D. in Civil and Environmental Engineering – Water Resources from Colorado State University and a Master's Degree in Water Resources Engineering from Parana Federal University in Brazil.

## JEREMY MARTINICH

Jeremy Martinich is the Chief of the Climate Science and Impacts Branch within EPA's Climate Change Division in Washington, DC. Through EPA's CIRA project, his work focuses on the quantification and monetization of climate change impacts in the United States, with a focus on identifying how risks can be reduced through greenhouse gas reductions and adaptation actions.

## LORI MILLER

Lori Miller is an Aquatic Ecologist / Climate Scientist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System in Vero Beach, FL. Education includes a Bachelor's degree in meteorology and a Master's degree in Environmental Engineering from the University of Florida. Lori joined U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2008 and has been working in aquatic restoration, environmental engineering, water resource planning and management, and climate change.

## CHRISTOPHER MOORE

Christopher Moore is an Oceanographer at the U.S. Geological Survey, St. Petersburg Center for Coastal and Marine Science (SPCMSC). Chris recently graduated from the University of South Florida's College of Marine Science with a Masters in Oceanography in 2021 under the Pathways Internship Program at the USGS. He specializes in coastal carbonate system studies that examine the relationship between rivers, estuaries, and coasts in the context of ocean acidification and climate change using in-situ sensors and discrete sampling methods.

## JIM MURLEY

Jim Murley is the Chief Resiliency Officer for Miami Dade County. Murley serves on the City of Miami Sea Level Rise Committee, spent over 10 years with the Florida Atlantic University where

he oversaw research on urban and environmental issues, is a founding Board member of the American Society for Adaptation Professionals and a Fellow at the National Academy of Public Administration. Murley has served as the Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs, chaired the Florida Energy and Climate Commission, as well as served as the Executive Director of 1000 Friends of Florida and the South Florida Regional Planning Council. He is a former Vice-Chair of the Miami-Dade County Sea Level Rise Task Force, and the Director of Florida Atlantic University's Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions. He earned his J.D. in Land Use and Environment from George Washington University Law School.

## JAYANTHA OBEYSEKERA

Dr. Obeysekera has extensive national and international experience in the planning and management of water resources systems with particular emphasis on modeling and implications of climate change with particular emphasis on sea level rise and changes in rainfall patterns. Before joining the Florida International University, he managed a large group of hydrologic and environmental modelers, directed the modeling associated with the Greater Everglades Ecosystem, and research on sea level rise and in general, other implications of climate change. Dr. Obeysekera has served as a member of several committees of the National Academy including those associated with the Sustainable Water & Environmental Management in California Bay-Delta, California Bay Delta Conservation Plan, Edwards Aquifer in Texas, and the Klamath River in Oregon. He chaired the committee which developed the 2019 Unified Sea Level Rise projections for the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact.

Dr. Obeysekera was a member of the federal advisory committee which directed the development of the 2014 National Climate Assessment and co-authored several sea level rise projections reports published in 2012, 2017, and more recently in 2022 by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Dr. Obeysekera was also a member of the Coastal Assessment Regional Scenario Working Group associated with the Department of Defense in the United States which developed the regional sea level projections for all military installations worldwide. He recently developed estimates of future changes in extreme rainfall for the Florida Building Commission and is currently assisting the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to develop new methods for incorporating sea level rise and rainfall patterns for the planning of future Transportation Infrastructure in the State of Florida. Currently, Dr. Obeysekera serves as a statewide co-director of the Florida Climate Institute.

Dr. Obeysekera, a registered Professional Engineer in the State of Florida, holds a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Sri Lanka, M. Eng. from the University of Roorkee, India, and a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering from Colorado State University. Dr. Obeysekera has co-authored over 70 research articles in numerous peer-reviewed journals and is a recipient of the 2015 Norman Medal of the American Society of Civil Engineers for a technical paper that makes a definitive contribution to engineering.



## **MICHAEL J. OSLAND**

Dr. Michael J. Osland is a Research Ecologist with the Wetland and Aquatic Research Center, at the U.S. Geological Survey. In broad terms, his research examines the effects of global change on ecosystems and the implications for ecological conservation and restoration. Much of his research focuses on wetland ecosystems at the dynamic interface between land and ocean (mangrove forests, salt marshes).

## **CHRISTOPHER PETTIT**

Christopher Pettit is the Former Director of the Office of Agricultural Water Policy for the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and is continuing to provide policy support to the Department while settling into his new role as the Executive Director of the Washington State Conservation Commission. The Office of Agricultural Water Policy is responsible for the development and implementation of best management practices on agricultural properties related to water quality and conservation, as well as additional policy and regulatory responsibilities. Chris previously served in the offices of counsel for both SFWMD and SWFWMD, as well as a Policy and Legislation Manager handling water and environmental issues for Palm Beach County. He has a law degree from the University of Florida, an LLM from the University of Cape Town, and undertook doctoral studies at the University of London.

## **COLIN POLSKY**

Dr. Polsky serves as the director of the Florida Atlantic University Center for Environmental Studies (CES) with the vision of improving Florida's sustainability through research, education and outreach on coastal resilience, wetlands ecology, and sustainable energy. Dr. Polsky is an environmental social scientist whose research and teaching examines how people create, perceive, and respond to environmental challenges. His interdisciplinary training is in mathematics, humanities, French, geography, and science & international affairs (from U. Texas, Penn State, and Harvard). Dr. Polsky helps build and lead teams to advance knowledge of U.S. climate vulnerabilities, and serves on the Broward County Climate Change Task Force and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce to engage and collaborate with the government and business sectors on resiliency efforts.

## **SCOTT PRINOS**

Scott Prinos is a supervisory hydrologist with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at the Caribbean-Florida Water Science Center in Davie, Florida and head of the Hydrogeology and Groundwater Modeling unit. He has been the lead investigator or co-investigator on many interdisciplinary projects.



## **TARA ROOT**

Tara Root is a Hydrologist with the Caribbean-Florida Water Science Center of the U.S. Geological Survey. Root has worked on a wide range of projects addressing problems related to surface water-groundwater interaction, nutrient transport, saltwater intrusion, and naturally occurring arsenic contamination. Prior to joining the USGS, she had 15 years of experience in academia teaching hydrogeology and water resources courses, supervising student research, and managing a water analysis lab. She has a B.S. in Geological Engineering from the Colorado School of Mines, M.S. in Geology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Ph.D. in Geology and minor in Environmental Chemistry and Technology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

## **MARCO RUBIO**

Senator Marco Rubio serves Florida in the United States Senate and is a member of the Senate Climate Caucus. Senator Rubio is a member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship and served as the former Chairman. He is also a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and as Member of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issue, Senator Rubio continues to fight for human rights and to uphold democracy around the globe. Senator Rubio is Vice Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, where he provides oversight over the U.S. government's Intelligence Community and national security apparatus. Additionally, Senator Rubio is a member of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee, which is responsible for allocating funding for the federal government.

## **MICHAEL SAVARESE**

Michael Savarese is a Professor of Coastal Resilience & Climate Adaptation within the Department of Marine and Earth Sciences within Florida Gulf Coast University's Water School. He has degrees in geoscience with background in coastal geology, and has been FGCU faculty since the University's opening in the fall of 1997. Mike's teaching and research interests concern the history of environmental change in coastal settings, particularly in response to human development, climate change, and sea-level rise. He has served as the Chairperson of the Big Cypress and the Southwest Florida Restoration Coordination Teams. More recently, he has served as a community liaison to foster coastal resilience and climate-change preparedness efforts throughout Southwest Florida and beyond, working closely with natural, urban, and cultural resource managers and elected officials within local, state, and federal government.

## **PAT STEED**

Pat Steed is the Executive Director of the Central Florida Regional Planning Council and Staff Services Director of the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization, serving

DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Okeechobee, and Polk counties. She has served as the Polk County Planning and TPO Director, City of Lakeland Planning Director, as a Project Director for a national consulting firm, and presented at the White House Forum on Regional Innovation. She seeks to match the multidisciplinary needs of the community with the needs of the environment. Pat currently serves as Vice-Chair of the Florida Transportation Plan and SIS Steering Committee, as a Board of Directors member for the National Association of Regional Councils and serves on the Council of Peers for the Southeastern Executive Directors Institute. Previously she served as a member of the Florida Greenways and Trails Council.

## **BETH STYS**

Beth Stys is the Regional Climate Adaptation Ecologist within the Southeast Science Applications and Migratory Birds Program of the USFWS. Prior to her current position, she spent 30 years working for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, focusing on conservation planning, imperiled species protection, terrestrial and freshwater aquatic conservation, and climate change. She was involved with FWC's climate change work since 2008, served as the co-Science Coordinator for the Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative from 2014 – 2017, and is an instructor for several USFWS – NCTC climate change courses. Beth received a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from Texas A&M University and an M.S. degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Ecology from Mississippi State University.

## **David Zierden**

David Zierden is the State Climatologist for Florida. His research at the Florida Climate Center directly involves his role as the State Climatologist. The Florida Climate Center is the leading authority on climate variability in Florida, particularly as related to ENSO. The Climate Center is involved with the Southeast Climate Consortium, one of the Regional Integrated Science and Assessment (RISA) teams funded by NOAA's Office of Global Programs. Through this involvement, the center conducts research into downscaled and localized climate forecasts and their application to the sectors of agriculture, forestry, and water resources. Zierden earned his B.S. and M.S. in Meteorology from Florida State University.