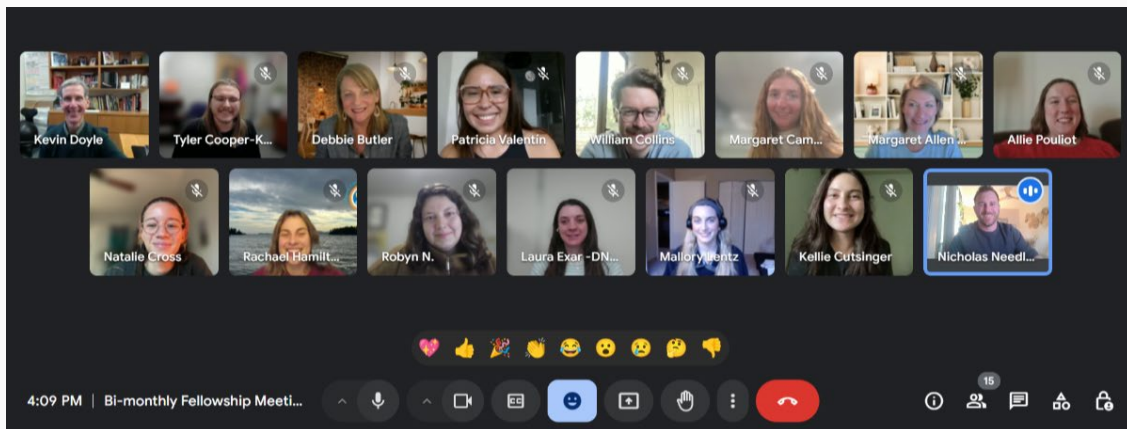




FELLOW NEWS

Quarterly Newsletter for NOAA Fellows and Friends



Coastal Management and Digital Coast Fellows meet virtually every two months to share updates on their work, exchange experiences, and participate in professional development training.

Get to Know the Fellows

Class of 2024 to 2026



Alexandrea “Allie” Pouliot, nominated by Rhode Island Sea Grant, is a Digital Coast Fellow who was matched with the **Association of State Floodplain Managers** and the **Coastal States Organization** to update and expand the Coastal **No Adverse Impact** program, which aims to build capacity for implementing higher standards in local floodplain and coastal management practices. Allie holds a master of environmental science and management from the University of Rhode Island and a bachelor of science in biology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Tell us about your project and what you’re hoping to accomplish: As a joint fellow with the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) and the Coastal States Organization (CSO), I will be updating and expanding the Coastal No Adverse Impact program. No Adverse Impact (NAI) is the association’s campaign to incentivize and build capacity for implementing higher standards in local

floodplain and coastal management through “[Good Neighbor](#)” practices that avoid harm to watershed neighbors upstream and downstream. My work will lead the way for development of a whole new suite of bite-sized online trainings and materials covering all seven topic areas, specifically targeted to coastal communities. My first step will be to review existing literature in order to understand what material is currently available and where gaps or outdated information exist. Then, I will develop technical guidance, create fact sheets, and collect case studies to demonstrate how coastal communities are currently and can begin implementing NAI techniques for floodplain stewardship. In year two, I will pilot the training and tools that I create with interested communities to evaluate areas for improvement.

How will the community benefit from your project? The No Adverse Impact philosophy is a wonderful idea based on thoughtful floodplain stewardship, but the content and format need an update, particularly for coastal communities. The product that I develop will feature foundational, modular trainings that will be accessible to coastal managers with any level of experience and able to be tailored to each person’s particular interests. This will be a major improvement on the original coastal NAI handbook, which is only available as a nearly 200-page PDF. In addition, the new guide will provide insight into planning for climate change and working with communities, and it will provide new floodplain management techniques that did not appear in the original version. The updated guidance and training will be beneficial to coastal communities across the country.

Who, or what, has inspired you to pursue this journey and why? An internship at Rhode Island Sea Grant, and in particular, Pam Rubinoff, inspired me to pursue a career in coastal resilience and community engagement. Pam has worked in coastal management extension for many years, and the network she has created in pursuit of resilience is amazing. It felt like she knew everyone in the Rhode Island coastal sphere, which is very impressive despite Rhode Island’s size. It was during this professional experience that I married my interests in science communication and my lifelong love of the Atlantic coast, and I became captivated by the dynamic job of coastal management. I loved building relationships with community members based on a mutual love of the coast and providing them the information to make informed decisions to protect their homes. When I saw the opportunity to spend two years working on a coastal management project, I knew I needed to apply.

What has been the biggest surprise about the fellowship? One thing I didn’t expect, but for which I am very grateful, is the opportunity to participate in other projects in addition to the one outlined in the fellowship proposal. For example, I was encouraged to attend the Shifting Seasons Summit this past October, where Indigenous peoples discussed climate change. This opportunity prepared me for my role with the Association of State Floodplain Manager’s new grant project to establish relationships with Tribal Nations in the Great Plains region. I am thrilled for the opportunity to engage in multiple diverse projects, as I have the capacity, over the course of my time here. These opportunities also help me feel more connected with my colleagues, as I am not isolated while working on my fellowship project.

Describe a particularly satisfying networking experience or professional development experience—what made it so good? In November, I attended the Coastal Inundation Community of Practice workshop in Seattle, Washington. The event was an amazing opportunity to network with people who are working in the coastal flooding space, where I could discuss my current project, previous experience, and future goals with like-minded individuals. I saw past colleagues and made new connections over two-and-a-half days of fruitful dialogue and information-sharing. The discussions were beautifully captured by a graphic notetaker. One of my favorite parts was discussing

the power of art in communicating climate science and then getting a chance to get our hands dirty ourselves by making zines. I was inspired by the passion that all of these individuals have for the field I am entering and look forward to seeing them again soon. The highlight of the event was orca and seal sightings on the field trip, which reminded me that beautiful wildlife can benefit from our work.

What words of wisdom can you offer to people considering applying for the fellowship in the future?

Be flexible and open to new opportunities! If you had asked me five years ago, I would not have guessed that I would be working for a coastal management organization based in Madison, Wisconsin. My roots are deep in the East Coast, and reading the fellowship project descriptions, I found myself drawn to opportunities in that geographic region. However, there was a certain appeal to this project that I couldn't deny, so I booked an interview. I felt an instant connection with my prospective mentors and found that the project was perfectly arranged to combine my own expertise with opportunities to grow and learn. In summary, don't be afraid to branch out to something—or somewhere—new and unexpected. You might love who you become!



Will Collins, nominated by Georgia Sea Grant, is a Digital Coast Fellow who was matched with **The Nature Conservancy's Gulf Program** to develop a project to protect and manage coastal wetlands, with a focus on facilitating inland marsh migration to enhance coastal resilience. Will holds a juris doctor from Georgia State University, a master of arts in teaching from Georgia College, and a bachelor of science in foreign service from Georgetown University.

Tell us about your project and what you're hoping to accomplish:

I am developing a project within The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to protect and manage coastal wetlands for the purpose of facilitating inland marsh migration. My overlapping interests include utilizing the FEMA Community Rating System as an incentive for community buy-in and incorporating The Nature Conservancy's priority estuary system projects.

How will the community benefit from your project? Marsh migration facilitation allows for tidal marsh to migrate inland, preferably within a controlled manner, in order to allow communities to continue to coexist with sea level rise, avoid saltwater inundation in developed areas, and manage the protection of coastal freshwater and brackish wetlands. Marsh protection offers a variety of ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration and habitat protection, but also helps with coastal stormwater and flooding management.

Who, or what, has inspired you to pursue this journey and why? My inspiration for pursuing this fellowship stems from a deep-seated appreciation for the resilience and beauty of coastal ecosystems. I previously taught high school students in Savannah, Georgia, where I saw a lot of inequality in the community, much of it stemming from the development of the city—its spatial organization. I think this led me to care more and more about the balance between economic development and protecting ecological space. Further, growing up near the coast, I spent a lot of time outside and near water, which created a base-level interest in working with and for natural systems. I'd say the urgency posed by environmental destruction and the visible impacts of climate change on coastal areas has also fueled my interest in pursuing marsh protection.

Describe a particularly challenging learning curve. How are you approaching it or solving it? A challenging learning curve has been mastering the intricacies of project management in the context of conservation. As a recently barred attorney, I was more accustomed to navigating legal frameworks, advocacy, and deep research rather than juggling timelines, budgets, and stakeholder dynamics. To address this, I've sought out mentorship from colleagues with project management experience and I've completed The Nature Conservancy's intensive project management program, *Highly Effective Teams*. I've also leaned on resources like project management software to fortify my project management capabilities.

What have your experiences taught you about your talents and where you'd like to take them in the future? Through this fellowship, I've discovered that while I love the complex work of conservation, I think I would like to hone a future more focused on the content of the work (legal, etc.) than the project management side of the work. I think I have a knack for distilling complex environmental information into consumable chunks and conveying that information to specific stakeholders. This has reinforced my interest in pursuing a career where I can bridge technical expertise and policy implementation; though like I said, I would like to be on the 'specialist' side rather than on the side of a project coordinator/manager/etc. Looking forward, I aim to continue helping develop projects that protect critical habitats, from the side of a legal strategist, conservation easement developer, real estate acquisitions attorney, or something of that sort.

News You Can Use

NOAA as Your Outreach Partner

Much of the work accomplished at a coastal management program has an outreach component, which means your fellowship projects probably do as well. As mentioned previously, NOAA's Office for Coastal Management has a newsletter, the *Coastal Communicator*, that can help. Past issues cover everything from how to write a marketing plan to good search engine optimization principles.

Today, we would like to draw your attention to a new article, "Using NOAA as Your Outreach Partner." The information is directed toward organizations who recently benefited from one of NOAA's grant programs, but the basic principles and opportunities are applicable for any partner organization—including yours.

Because we consider the fellowship programs to be a special part of the NOAA family, we also encourage you to reach out to NOAA's outreach team (pun kind of intended). Talking things over with someone, and sharing ideas, is where the marketing magic usually happens. We'd love to be a part of that. Contact Caitlyn.McCrary@noaa.gov or Sara.Edwards@noaa.gov as needed.

NOAA Training and Resources

Upcoming Offerings

A training curriculum devoted to coastal

Additional Resources

You may also be interested in additional

resource management. Courses are scheduled throughout the year.

training resources from our Digital Coast partners and contributing partners.

[Course Calendar](#)

[Training Resources](#)

About the Program

The NOAA Coastal Management and Digital Coast Fellowships were established to provide on-the-job education and training opportunities in coastal resource management and policy, and to provide project assistance to state coastal zone management programs and Digital Coast partners. The fellowship programs are administered by NOAA's [Office for Coastal Management](#). Fellowships are open to postgraduate students. For more information, visit [this webpage](#).

