

Department of Environmental Science and Policy Seminar Series

The Nature Conservancy's Innovative Approaches to Marine and Coastal Conservation and Restoration in Florida

Laura Geselbracht, The Nature Conservancy

DATE: Friday, 11/12/2021 **Time:** 10:30 am **Room:** SLAB103

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/3ntliZi>



Abstract: The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Florida Chapter has a multi-dimensional approach to marine and coastal conservation in Florida. We are working extensively with partners to restore oyster and coral reefs employing spatial and decision analysis techniques along with in-the-water projects. We are also employing innovative techniques to enhance coastal resilience using nature-based solutions and never used financing approaches to restore and enhance systems impacted by multiple threats. Oyster and coral reefs once formed extensive and vibrant living structures in many of Florida's estuarine and nearshore waters. Most of these large reef structures are either gone or severely compromised due to human activities. The loss of these living structural communities has severely impacted livelihoods and recreational enjoyment, as well as biodiversity, the glue that keep systems strong in the face of adversity. The loss of coastal ecosystems has also rendered coastal communities more vulnerable to storm surge impacts and flooding due to tropical storms. Restoring and enhancing these coastal ecosystems where space allows is a cost-effective way to protect more people from property damage. Laura will provide an overview of current marine and coastal projects and will highlight how TNC is valuing avoided damages provided by natural systems as a means of driving action on conservation.

Bio: Laura has been involved with marine science and conservation work for over 30 years on both the U.S. Pacific Coast and in Florida, the US South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts. For the last several years, Laura's work has focused on developing and using scientific information to promote the use of nature-based solutions to enhance shoreline resilience and to improve methods for siting and monitoring coastal ecosystem restoration projects. Laura serves as a scientific advisor to the Southeast Florida Climate Change Compact, Apalachicola Bay System Initiative, Florida Sea Grant, Statewide Ecosystem Assessment of Coastal and Aquatic Resources, Florida Oyster Recovery Science Working Group and on several Nature Conservancy projects. She previously served on the Board of the Florida Ocean Alliance for 5 years. Laura holds a master's degree in Marine Affairs from the University of Washington and a B.A. in Aquatic Biology from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Recent publications include Valuing the Flood Risk Reduction Benefits of Florida's Mangroves (2019), Shellfish Reef Restoration in Practice, In Restoration Guidelines for Shellfish Reefs (2019) and A Multiscale Natural Community and Species Vulnerability Assessment of the Gulf Coast, USA (2018). Laura has been interviewed on BBC Business Matters, Voice of America, the Weather Channel and National Public Radio among other media outlets.