DETAILED TENTATIVE AGENDA

NCER

National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration

April 13-16, 2026 | **Omaha, Nebraska**

"Return on Investment: How Are We Doing and What Is the Future?"

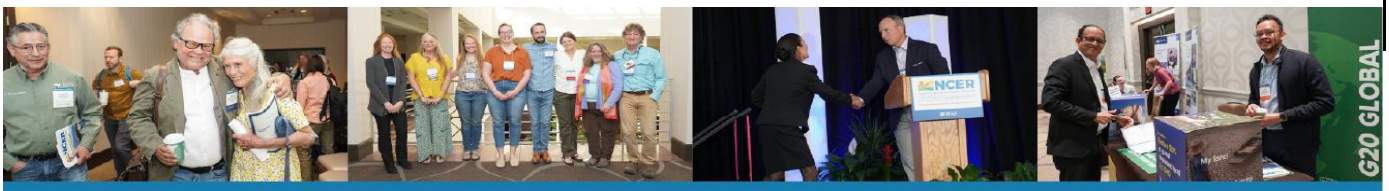
https://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/ncer/

The National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (NCER) is a leading interdisciplinary event focused on advancing ecosystem restoration through cutting-edge science, engineering, planning, and policy — all within a collaborative framework. NCER brings together a diverse network of decision-makers, scientists, engineers, policymakers, planners, and stakeholders from government agencies, industry, NGOs, Tribal nations, academia, and other organizations actively engaged in restoration efforts.

Conference sessions will dive deep into bold ideas and the mechanics behind large-scale aquatic restoration programs. In addition to aquatic systems, topics will span terrestrial ecosystems, decision-making frameworks, funding mechanisms, and project prioritization strategies. Themes of transformation, resilience, and the future of restoration will be explored through interactive discussions and cross-disciplinary dialogue.

Attendees will gain critical insights into restoration challenges, key lessons learned, and emerging opportunities. The conference offers a unique platform to learn from peers, build new partnerships, exchange innovative ideas, and enhance professional experience — all essential elements for those working in the restoration field.

NCER is the premier national forum for ecosystem restoration professionals, and if you're involved in this vital work, we invite you to be a part of it. **Join us and contribute to shaping the future of restoration!**



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Monday, April 13, 2026

1:00pm - 5:30pm

OPTIONAL Pre-conference Field Trip to Copeland Bend WMA & Levee Setback

Join us for an exploration of the Missouri River L-575 Levee Setback at Copeland Bend Wildlife Management Area, a landmark example of engineering integrated with ecological restoration, designed to reduce flood risk while restoring natural river functions.

Field Trip Details:

TOUR LEADER: Dave Crane, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha, NE

Early Cost: $50 / Person *(by December 5, 2025 - or until trip is full)*
Regular Cost: $65 / Person *(After December 5, 2025)*
[Arrive by 1:00pm; Bus loads at 1:15pm; Bus departs at 1:30pm and returns at 5:30pm]

Visit the NCER website for more detail at: conference.ifas.ufl.edu/ncer/pre-conference-field-trip

4:00pm - 7:00pm

Conference Registration Opens
Poster Presenters and Sponsors Move-In Displays

5:00pm - 6:30pm

Informal Gathering in the Hotel Lobby Lounge
Join us for a relaxed get-together with colleagues—everyone will cover their own food and drinks.

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

7:30am - 5:00pm

Conference Registration Open

7:30am - 8:30am

Coffee Service in Poster & Sponsor Display Area
(Attendees are on their own for breakfast.)

Plenary Session — 8:30am - 10:00am

Capitol Ballroom Sections 2, 3 & 4

8:30am-10:00am

Opening Plenary Session
"Nebraska and the Great Plains:
Whooping Crane Conservation at the Continental Scale"

MODERATOR: Chad Smith, President, Headwaters Corporation, Kearney, NE

8:30 Moderator Introduction & Overview — Welcome to NCER 2026

8:40 **Larkin Powell**, Director and Professor of Conservation Biology/Animal Ecology, School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE

9:00 **Mike Forsberg**, Conservation Photographer, Research Assistant Professor, School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska Lincoln, Lincoln, NE

9:40 Q&A with the Audience

10:00am - 10:30am

AM Break in Poster Hall

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

Concurrent Sessions — 10:30am - 12:00noon

	Session 1	Session 2
	Capitol Ballroom Section 2	**Capitol Ballroom Sections 3 & 4**
	What Does the Future Hold? A Glimpse of the Everglades Post Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Implementation	**Nature's ROI: Quantifying the Economic Value of Ecosystem Restoration**
	Gina Paduano Ralph USACE, Jacksonville District, Jacksonville, FL	**Maya Kocian** Earth Economics, Tacoma, WA
10:30am	**Introduction & Overview**	**Introduction & Overview**
10:35am	**Eva Velez** USACE, Jacksonville, FL **Vision in Fruition: Envisioning and Evaluating the Future with CERP**	**Harry Stone,** Ohio River Basin Alliance, Cincinnati, OH **Ben Eubanks,** Resource Environmental Solutions (RES), Bellaire, TX **Kelly Watkinson,** The Land Trust Alliance, Washington, DC **Paul Hindsley,** The Everglades Foundation, Palmetto Bay, FL **Bryan Van Stippen,** National Indian Carbon Coalition, Little Canada, MN Restoring natural ecosystems delivers measurable economic returns. Drawing from recent Earth Economics studies, five partners representing diverse ecosystems across the US will discuss how they have used ecosystem services valuation to further their conservation and restoration goals. Attendees will gain insights into valuation methods, public and private sector use of valuation, and how to communicate nature's ROI to decision-makers.
10:50am	**Zulamet Vega-Liriano** USACE, Jacksonville, FL **Assumptions for a Projected CERP in the Second Periodic CERP Update**	
11:05am	**Pierre Massena** USACE, Jacksonville, FL **What Insights do the Second Periodic CERP Update Modeling Results Provide about CERP?**	
11:20am	**Gina Paduano Ralph** USACE, Jacksonville, FL **RECOVER's Scientific Evaluation of the Second Periodic CERP Update (CERP Goal 1: Enhance Ecologic Values)**	
11:35am	**Chloe' Vorseth** USACE, Jacksonville, FL **RECOVER's Scientific Evaluation of the Second Periodic CERP Update (CERP Goal 2: Enhance Economic Values and Social Well Being)**	
11:50am	**Discussion**	
12noon-1:30pm	**Lunch on Own** The Marriott has a restaurant lobby level, and there are plenty of nearby restaurants and small shops and if you venture a bit further. It's a 12-minute walk to Old Market area, boasting hundreds of restaurants, shops and unique businesses.	

	Tuesday, April 14, 2026	
	Concurrent Sessions — 1:30pm - 3:00pm	
	Session 3	**Session 4**
	Capitol Ballroom Section 2	**Capitol Ballroom Sections 3 & 4**
	Connecting Research and Restoration in the Upper Mississippi River System	**Nature Positive and Nature Based Solutions**
	Jeffrey Houser U.S. Geological Survey, La Crosse, WI	**Jeremy Thomas** Jacobs, Sacramento, CA
1:30pm	**Introduction & Overview**	**Introduction & Overview**
1:35pm	**Nathan De Jager** US Geological Survey, La Crosse, WI **Collaborative Modelling Improves Floodplain Vegetation Management Actions at Reno Bottoms: From Scenario Building to Flood Inundation Modelling to Forest Succession Model Outputs**	**Christopher Allen** Jacobs, Sonoma, CA **Optimizing Multi-Benefit ROI: Vision and Strategy Approaches for Nature Positive and Nature-Based Solutions**
1:50pm	**Andrew Meier** USACE, La Crosse, WI **Collaborative Modelling Improves Evaluation of Proposed Floodplain Vegetation Management Actions At Reno Bottoms: Forest Succession Modeling, Habitat Evaluation, and Incremental Cost Analysis**	**Debra Bishop** Jacobs, Sacramento, CA **Reconnecting Floodplains Along the San Joaquin River, California**
2:05pm	**Nicole Buckley** US Geological Survey, La Crosse, WI **Wind-Driven Sediment Resuspension in the Upper Mississippi River: Understanding Wave Dynamics to Guide Habitat Restoration**	**Kit Hamblen** Jacobs, Bellevue, WA **Nature Positive Approaches in Rehabilitating Omaha's Cole Creek Watershed**
2:20pm	**Jeffrey Houser** US Geological Survey, La Crosse, WI *(on behalf of Nicole Ward, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Lake City, MN)* **A Systems Approach to the Science – Management Interface: Improving Both Research and Decision Making**	**Patrick Hickey** Jacobs, Denver, CO **I-25 Highway Improvement Project Use of Process Based Restoration Techniques to Provide Wildlife Habitat Connectivity and Mitigation for Federally Threatened Species**
2:35pm	**Kristen Bouska** US Geological Survey, La Crosse, WI **A Restoration Science Framework for Linking Restoration Actions and Ecological Responses at Site to System Scales**	**Elise Ibendahl** Jacobs, Saint Louis, MO **Flooding to Renewal: Brentwood Bound Flood Mitigation**
2:50pm	**Discussion**	**Discussion**
3:00pm- 3:30pm	**PM Break in Poster Hall**	

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

Concurrent Sessions — 3:30pm - 5:00pm

	Session 5	Session 6
	Capitol Ballroom Section 2	**Capitol Ballroom Sections 3 & 4**
	Leveraging Data Analysis to Inform Implementation Actions for Habitat on the Upper Mississippi River	**Partnerships Enhancing Restoration**
	Benjamin Vandermyde US ACE, Rock Island District, Rock Island, IL	**Nick Aumen** Private Citizen, Loxahatchee, FL
3:30pm	**Introduction & Overview**	**Introduction & Overview**
3:35pm	**Molly Van Appledorn** US Geological Survey, La Crosse, WI **Leveraging Big Data and Expert Knowledge to Develop a Forest Classification System for Improved Stewardship of Mississippi and Illinois River Floodplain Ecosystems**	**Chadwin Smith** Headwaters, Vestal, NY **Refining the Trinity River Restoration Program to Improve Collaboration and Outcomes**
3:50pm	**Brian Stoff** USACE, West Alton, MO **Identifying Local Area Inundation Expectancy, Drainage Capacity, and Geomorphology Conditions to Correlate Suitable Forest Community Type to Manage**	**Heidi Mehl** The Nature Conservancy, Lawrence, KS **Leveraging Federal Partnerships to Meet Global Ecosystem Restoration Goals**
4:05pm	**Bruce Henry** US Fish and Wildlife Service, Onalaska, WI **Considering Floodplain Forest Dynamics and Expectations of Growth and Structural Development Potential for Unique Forest Community Types**	**Margaret Pemberton** USACE, Kansas City, MO **Sustainable Rivers Program E-Flow and E-Pool Efforts on the Kansas and Osage River Basins**
4:20pm	**Alicia Carhart** Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, La Crosse, WI **Using Simple Models to Understand the Distribution of Areas Suitable for Vegetation Restoration in a Large River**	**Rod Wittler** Bureau of Reclamation, Sacramento, CA **Implementing On-the-Ground Salmon Habitat Projects Based on Priorities Derived from the CVPIA Structured Decision Making Process**
4:35pm	**Benjamin Vandermyde** USACE, Pleasant Valley, IA **Landform Alteration to Enable Natural Function of Ridge and Swale Geomorphology to Establish Suitable Conditions for Forest Community Types**	**Melissa Mosier** Audubon Great Plains, Lincoln, NE **Vision for an Ecologically Sound Platte River (VESPR): Building Resilience Through Informal Collaboration**
4:50pm	**Discussion**	**Discussion**
5:00pm-7:00pm	**Welcome Networking Reception** (Beverages & Hors d'oeuvres Provided)	

	Wednesday, April 15, 2026
7:30am-5:30pm	**Conference Registration Open**
7:30am-8:30am	**Coffee Service in Poster & Sponsor Display Area** (Attendees are on their own for breakfast.)
	Plenary Session — 8:30am - 10:00am
	Capitol Ballroom Sections 2, 3 & 4
8:30am - 10:00am	**<u>Plenary Session</u>** **Salmon and Bison as Indicators of** **Ecosystem Restoration Success (or not?)** **<u>MODERATOR</u>: Matt Grabau**, Adaptive Management Group Manager Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado River, Multi-Species Conservation, Tucson, AZ 8:30 Moderator Introduction & Overview 8:35 **Chris Jordan**, Mathematical Biology and Systems Monitoring Program Manager, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, Mathematical Biology and Systems Monitoring Program, NOAA Fisheries, Seattle, WA 9:10 **Jason Baldes**, Member, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Executive Director, Wind River Tribal Buffalo Initiative, Adjunct Professor, Central Wyoming College and Wind River Tribal College, Board of Directors, Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council, Board of Trustees, Conservation Lands Fund, Senior Tribal Buffalo Program Manager National Wildlife Federation Tribal Partnerships Program, Kinnear, WY 9:45 Q&A with the Audience
10:00am-10:30am	**AM Break in Poster Hall**

	Wednesday, April 15, 2026	
	Concurrent Sessions — 10:30am - 12:00noon	
	Session 7	**Session 8**
	Capitol Ballroom Section 2	**Capitol Ballroom Sections 3 & 4**
	Frameworks and Feedback Loops: RECOVER's Role in Ensuring Everglades Restoration Objectives are Met	**River Restoration Success Stories: Lessons Linking Decision-Making & Science**
	Jenna May USACE, Jacksonville District, Jacksonville, FL	**Clint Alexander** ESSA Technologies Ltd., Vancouver, BC, Canada
10:30am	**Introduction & Overview**	**Introduction & Overview**
10:35am	**Tasso Cocoves** USACE, Jacksonville, FL **Are We There Yet? How RECOVER Determines Everglades Restoration Progress and Success**	**Craig Fischenich** FIScH Engineering, Vicksburg, MS **Adaptive Management in Action: Lessons from the Fort Peck Dam Test Flow for Pallid Sturgeon Recovery on the Upper Missouri River**
10:50am	**Jessica Dell** USACE, Jacksonville, FL **Are We Heading in the Right Direction? Evaluating Restoration Progress to Inform Decision Making Along the Way**	**Matthew Grabau** Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program, Boulder City, NV **The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program: Lessons from the First 20 Years**
11:05am	**Jenna May** USACE, Jacksonville, FL **Assessing and Communicating Stepwise Gains in Large Restoration Efforts**	**Clint Alexander** ESSA Technologies Ltd., Vancouver, BC, Canada **Weight-of-Evidence Approach for Understanding the Recovery of Okanagan Sockeye Salmon**
11:20am	**Kiah Williams** USACE, Jacksonville, FL **Continuous Improvement in Our Understanding of Future Restoration Performance**	**Marc Nelitz** ESSA Technologies Ltd., Vancouver, BC, Canada **Bringing the Salmon Home: An Indigenous-Led Approach to Pacific Salmon Reintroduction in the Columbia River**
11:35am	**Stephanie Verhulst** USACE, Jacksonville, FL **Building Ecological Tools to Aid in Determining Everglades Restoration Success**	**Michael Belchik** Yurok Tribe, Klamath, CA **Klamath Dam Removal: The World's Largest Fisheries Restoration Project Becomes Reality**
11:50am	**Discussion**	**Discussion**
12noon-1:30pm	**Lunch on Own** The Marriott has a restaurant lobby level, and there are plenty of nearby restaurants and small shops and if you venture a bit further. It's a 12-minute walk to Old Market area, boasting hundreds of restaurants, shops and unique businesses.	

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

Concurrent Sessions — 1:30pm - 3:00pm

	Session 9	Session 10
	Capitol Ballroom Section 2	Capitol Ballroom Sections 3 & 4
	Tools for Restoration Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring — Part 1 of 2	Collaborative Decision-Making, Water Development, and Endangered Species on the Platte River
	Howie Gonzales USACE, Jacksonville District, Jacksonville, FL	**Chadwin Smith** Headwaters, Kearney, NE
1:30pm	**Introduction & Overview**	**Introduction & Overview**
1:35pm	**Devin Wilson** CDM Smith, Inc., Kansas City, MO **Leveraging Advanced Remote Sensing and Machine Learning Data to Inform Ecological Restoration, Design, and Monitoring**	**Jason Farnsworth,** Headwaters/PRRIP, Kearney, NE **Brock Merrill,** Bureau of Reclamation, Torrington, WY **Amy Ostdiek,** State of Colorado, Denver, CO **Jason Mead,** State of Wyoming, Cheyenne, WY **Jesse Bradley,** State of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP or Program) is a collaborative Recovery Implementation Program negotiated and implemented to address the needs of four threatened or endangered species using the Platte River Basin while allowing water development to continue to occur. Structural and functional attributes of the PRRIP were specifically negotiated and designed to nurture collaborative decision-making and carefully link science learning with informed management decisions. Shared decision-making, an independent Executive Director and staff, agreed-upon goals, and defined contributions of money, land, and water are foundational to Program success. This panel of PRRIP decision-makers will provide top-level insight into the return on investment since 2007 in this unique case study.
1:50pm	**Zhenghong Tang** University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE **Developing a Near Real-Time Information Platform to Monitor and Assess Hydrological Performance of Conservation Lands**	
2:05pm	**Edward Stowe** USACE, Athens, GA **Predicting Upper Mississippi River Backwater Fish Community Attributes from Site- and Patch-Scale Characteristics to Inform Restoration Decision-Making**	
2:20pm	**Erich Hester** Virginia Tech University, Blacksburg, VA **Watershed-Scale Effects of Floodplain and Stage 0 Restoration on Hydrologic Attenuation**	
2:35pm	**Andrea Nocentini** Seminole Tribe of Florida, Hollywood, FL **Monitoring the Forested Wetlands of the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Big Cypress Indian Reservation in Anticipation of Hydrologic Restoration**	
2:50pm	**Discussion**	
3:00pm-3:30pm	**PM Break in Poster Hall**	

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

Concurrent Sessions — 3:30pm - 5:00pm

	Session 11	Session 12
	Capitol Ballroom Section 2	**Capitol Ballroom Sections 3 & 4**
	Tools for Restoration Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring — Part 2 of 2	**Adaptive Restoration: Strengthening Water Systems for Resilience and Clean Water**
	Jason Hassrick ICF, San Rafael, CA	**Ken Bradshaw** USACE, Jacksonville District, Jacksonville, FL
3:30pm	**Introduction & Overview**	**Introduction & Overview**
3:35pm	**Brook Herman** USACE-ERDC, Vicksburg, MS **Nationwide Network for Monitoring Ecosystem Recovery**	**Sarah Milligan** Bandelier National Monument, Los Alamos, NM **Riparian Restoration in a Changing Ecosystem: Removing Invasives and Restoring Beavers and Habitat to a Post-Fire and Flood Landscape**
3:50pm	**Denise Reed** Denise Reed LLC, Montegut, LA **Ecosystem Restoration Planning for the Atchafalaya River System: Models and Metrics to Assess Project Performance**	**Joseph McMahon** The University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD **The Benefits of Riparian Restoration During Floods: From Drinking Water Quality to Wider Society**
4:05pm	**Heather Page** Anchor QEA, Inc., Seattle, WA **Multi-Benefit Solutions: Crafting an Integrated Plan for the Chehalis Basin**	**Robb Lutz** EA Engineering, Science, and Technology, Inc. PBC, Lincoln, NE **Lake Rehabilitation: Enhancing Water Quality, Habitat, and Recreation**
4:20pm	**Ash Zemenick** Delta Stewardship Council, Sacramento, CA **Assessing the Impact of Delta Science Program Funded Research on Decision Making in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta**	**Steve Bartell** Stantec, Nashville, TN **Adapting a Bioenergetics-Based Food Web, Ecosystem Model to Inform Nitrogen Management and Ecosystem Restoration in Old Tampa Bay**
4:35pm	**Marley Bonaquist** Cornell University, Ithaca, NY **Environmental Graphics as a Tool to Communicate Ecological Complexity in Supporting Resource Management and Public Policy Decision Making**	**Oke Oguns** Renaissance Africa Energy Company, Port Harcourt Rivers **Advancing Mangrove Restoration in Bodo Through Strategic Revegetation and Monitoring**
4:50pm	**Discussion**	**Discussion**
5:00pm - 7:00pm	**Poster Session & Networking Reception** (Beverages & Hors d'oeuvres Provided)	

	Thursday, April 16, 2026	
7:30am - 5:00pm	**Conference Registration Open**	
7:30am - 8:30am	**Coffee Service in Poster & Sponsor Display Area** (Attendees are on their own for breakfast.)	
	Concurrent Sessions — 8:30am - 10:00am	
	Session 13	**Session 14**
	Capitol Ballroom Section 2	**Capitol Ballroom Sections 3 & 4**
	Remote Sensing Applications for Adaptive Management	**Large-Scale Levee Setbacks for Missouri River Resilience**
	Becky Blasius Bureau of Reclamation, Boulder City, NV	**Matt Chambers** University of Georgia, Athens, GA
8:30am	**Introduction & Overview**	**Introduction & Overview**
8:35am	**Quinn Lewis** Headwaters Corporation Lakewood, CO **Unoccupied Aerial Systems for Bridging Scale Gaps in Adaptive Management of River Systems: Opportunities and Challenges**	**Robert Jacobson** University of Missouri, Columbia, MO **Geographic and Historical Context for Levee Setback Decisions, Lower Missouri River**
8:50am	**Partick Farrell** Headwaters Corporation Kearney, NE **Learning by Doing: A System-Scale Flow Experiment to Adaptively Manage Habitat for Whooping Cranes**	**Dave Crane** USACE Omaha District, Omaha, NE **L-536 Levee Setback Case Study and Applied Research Integration in New Projects Along the Lower Missouri River**
9:05am	**Victoria Treto** Bureau of Reclamation Boulder City, NV **Increasing Accessibility and Utilization of Remote Sensing Tools for the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program**	**Rabindra Parajuli** University of Georgia, Athens, GA **Monitoring and Predicting Biodiversity Conservation Benefits of Levee Setbacks**
9:20am	**David Gundlach** Bureau of Reclamation Boulder City, NV **Fusion of Satellite Imagery and Soil Moisture Data**	**Mark Dixon** University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD **Forest Dynamics along the Lower Missouri River: Implications for Floodplain Management and Ecosystem Services**
9:35am	**Conor McMahon** University of California Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA **Aerial and Terrestrial LiDAR and Time Series of Multispectral Satellite Imagery for Characterizing Bird Habitat Structure and Composition on the Santa Clara River**	**Matt Chambers** University of Georgia, Athens, GA **Return on Investment for Missouri River Levee Setbacks**
9:50am	**Discussion**	**Discussion**
10:00am - 10:30am	**AM Break in Poster Hall**	

Thursday, April 16, 2026

Concurrent Sessions — 10:30am - 12:00noon

	Session 15	Session 16
	Capitol Ballroom Section 2	**Capitol Ballroom Sections 3 & 4**
	Adaptive Management and Decision-Making for Large-Scale Restoration	**The Role of Compensatory Mitigation in Ecosystem Restoration - A Candid Conversation Between Practitioners, Bankers, and Local and State Government**
	Patrick Farrell Headwaters, Vestal, NY	**Brian Murphy** River Network, Denver, CO
10:30am	**Introduction & Overview**	**Introduction & Overview**
10:35am	**Gretchen Ehlinger** USACE, Jacksonville, FL **Incorporating Adaptive Management in Ecosystem Restoration and Navigation Projects: Lessons from the Everglades and Application to Coral Reef Environments**	**Moneka Worah**, ERO Resources, Lakewood, CO **Jeremy Sueltenfuss**, SWCA, Inc., Broomfield, CO **Stephen Decker**, Rocky Mountain Mitigation, Denver, CO **Mary Powell**, Mile High Flood District, Lakewood, CO Due to changes at the federal level, Colorado is currently implementing a state dredge and fill program. During program development, there has been a wide array of stakeholder feedback on mitigation and how best to implement a mitigation program. This session includes a diverse panel discussing the role of compensatory mitigation in ecosystem restoration and how states, including Colorado, can encourage an array of mitigation methods to promote stream and wetland restoration at the watershed level. Panelists include representatives from the conservation sector, mitigation banking sector, local governments, and practitioners. Questions to the panel include “how can mitigation banks and in lieu fee programs incentivize ecosystem restoration and create science-backed restoration initiatives at the local level”? “How can permittee responsible mitigation for local watershed managers be encouraged to protect vital aquatic resources”? “What role should state governments play in incentivizing ecosystem restoration projects”?
10:50am	**Brian Johnson** USACE, St. Louis, MO **Small Changes Big Impact: Making Operational Changes at USACE Infrastructure on the Mississippi River to Create Ecosystem Benefits**	
11:05am	**Mark Cornish** USACE, Rock Island, IL **Mississippi River Fish Passage Design, Construction, and Monitoring**	
11:20am	**Daniel Levish** Bureau of Reclamation, Denver, CO **Central Valley Project Salmonid Habitat Structured Decision Making Process**	
11:35am	**Jenna Paul** Bureau of Reclamation, Sacramento, CA **Using NOFOs As an Instrument to Improve Performance of Decision Support Models**	
11:50am	**Discussion**	
12noon-1:30pm	**Lunch on Own** The Marriott has a restaurant lobby level, and there are plenty of nearby restaurants and small shops and if you venture a bit further. It’s a 12-minute walk to Old Market area, boasting hundreds of restaurants, shops and unique businesses.	

Thursday, April 16, 2026

Concurrent Sessions — 1:30pm - 3:00pm

	Session 17	Session 18
	Capitol Ballroom Section 2	**Capitol Ballroom Sections 3 & 4**
	Past, Present, and Future of Everglades and Florida Bay	**Nebraska's Watershed-Based Approach for Water Quality and Quantity Management**
	Fahmida Khatun Everglades National Park, National Park Services, Boynton Beach, FL	**Matt Pillard** HDR Engineering, Inc, Omaha, NE
1:30pm	**Introduction & Overview**	**Introduction & Overview**
1:35pm	**Christopher McVoy** South Florida Engineering & Consulting, Lake Worth, FL **Everglades Restoration – Where Are We Headed**	**Jesse Bradley,** Director, Nebraska Dept. of Water, Energy, and Environment, Lincoln, NE **Amanda Grint,** Assistant General Manager, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, Omaha, NE **Ryan Chapman,** Assistant General Manger - Lower Platte North Natural Resources District, Wahoo, NE **Jennifer Schellpeper,** Water Division Administrator, Nebraska Dept. of Water, Energy, and Environment, Lincoln, NE Nebraska uses a unique system for managing its most important natural resource – water. The backbone of this system is rooted in a watershed-based approach through the establishment of Natural Resource Districts. This system of locally driven decision-making and integration with Nebraska's state agencies, provides the framework for state water planning. Panel members represent Nebraska's administrative entities that collaboratively manage Nebraska's water resources. Panelists will be engaged in discussion highlighting the successes, challenges, and opportunities of Nebraska's system for water resource planning.
1:50pm	**Wei Huang** Florida International University, Miami, FL **Hydrologic Connectivity Between the Greater Everglades and Florida Bay Through the Taylor River Slough Modified by Environmental Stressors and Water Management Activities**	
2:05pm	**Zaki Moustafa** South Florida Engineering & Consulting, Lake Worth, FL **Flow and Salinity: Understanding the Dynamics of Freshwater Inflow on Florida Bay's Ecosystem**	
2:20pm	**Caiyun Zhang** Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL **Integrating Geophysical and Remote Sensing Techniques to Model Peat Stability in the Everglades**	
2:35pm	**Alemayehu Dula Shanko** Florida International University, Miami, FL **The Future of Florida Bay: Modeling and Managing Flow for Healthy Bay**	
2:50pm	**Discussion**	
3:00pm-3:30pm	**PM Break in Poster Hall**	

Thursday, April 16, 2026

Plenary Session — 3:30pm - 5:00pm

Session 19

Capitol Ballroom Sections 2, 3 & 4

Managing Complex Restoration Programs

MODERATOR: **Darcy Austin**, SWC, Sacramento, CA

3:30 Moderator Introduction & Overview

3:35 **John Hickey**, USACE, Davis, CA
"Sustainable Rivers Program: Implementing
Environmental Actions via Adaptive Management of USACE Infrastructure"

3:50 **Marissa Lack**, USACE, Rock Island, IL
"Managing Evolving Priorities: System-Scale
Adaptive Management on the Upper Mississippi River"

4:05 **Andrew LoSchiavo**, USACE, Jacksonville, FL
"All Hands on Board: Partnering with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
on Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration"

4:20 Discussion

4:30 **Closing Keynote Presentation**
"The Federal Role in Ensuring a Return on Investment in Large-Scale Ecosystem Restoration"
The conference will conclude with a dynamic keynote address offering a high-level federal perspective. This presentation will provide an inside look at federal decision-making and prioritization processes. Attendees will leave energized and empowered with a clear mission: to deliver the science, innovation, and on-the-ground strategies that inform leadership decisions and drive the future of ecosystem restoration.

5:00pm — Conference Concludes

5:00pm - 6:00pm — Poster & Sponsor Display Removal *(displays must be dismantled and removed by 6pm.*

NCER 2026 Concludes