

The Urgency of Urban Ecosystem Restoration - Evolving Strategies and Motivations on the East Coast

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In our rapidly urbanizing world, cities are faced with numerous challenges to balance preservation of natural spaces with development for housing, commerce, and infrastructure. Natural areas within the urban landscape provide critical benefits to city dwellers, and the need for urban ecosystem restoration has become more pressing than ever due to the increased impacts of climate change on urban centers along the east coast where the majority of Americans live. Assessing and tracking ecosystem services provided by urban natural areas is required to inform protection, management, and restoration efforts across a wide variety of habitats. Restoration and management of urban natural areas is complex because ecological networks involve humans as well as their built infrastructure. Understanding on-going stressors exacerbated by physical space constraints as well as human actions and climate change is critical to establish achievable restoration goals.

This panel discussion will take a broad look at urban restoration planning and design strategies and actions, with a focus on how they have changed over the last ten years. Panelists will provide unique perspectives on how restoration approaches transcend habitats at the landscape scale (e.g. from upland forest to coastal wetlands) while also interacting with dense urban development. Our panelists are experts on public-private partnerships, research to inform planning and design, ecological design and construction, assessment and long-term monitoring, vegetation management, public engagement and stewardship, and public access to amenities offered by natural systems. They will offer case studies about unique projects in New York City, Miami and other urban areas and interactive discussions to provide participants with actionable insights and tools to consider for their own cities.

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