

Build It, But Will They Come? Assessing the Benefits of Nearshore Habitat Restoration for Ecosystem Approaches to Fishery and Habitat Management

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This panel session will review approaches to assess the ecological and economic benefits of habitat restoration, the utility of these assessments in advancing ecosystem based management, and the lessons these assessments can teach to guide future restoration. The complexity in assessing habitat value continues to increase due to a desire to quantify not only use or even abundance, but how restoration advances food web functioning, ecosystem-level productivity, and broader social and economic benefits. Evaluation of habitat restoration projects is more important than ever as projects now seek to provide protection from the effects of climate change and to enhance habitat for fish, other living resources, and community stakeholders. The ongoing shift to nature-based infrastructure and interest in achieving multiple societal and ecosystem service benefits is leading to new habitat science and assessment techniques. Panelists will discuss restoration monitoring and assessment approaches that quantify fish use, movement, and productivity, engage stakeholders and value ecosystem services. Panelists will also talk about how the results of this science can be incorporated into future restoration projects and fishery management. The session is relevant to modelers, researchers, and agency managers locally and nationally and can inform future restoration planning, designs, and monitoring.

Panelist Biographies:

Mr. Vogt is an estuarine ecologist who has 15 years of experience as an ecosystem science and synthesis manager, leading, planning and designing quantitative fish and habitat science programs.

Dr. Zink is a restoration ecologist with 20 years of experience in offshore, estuarine, and aquaculture research and is currently leading assessment of fish-habitat linkages related to restoration of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Mrs. Coakley has more than 20 years experience in fisheries management and science, and is the current lead on fish habitat initiatives for the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Dr. Olander is a Program Director at the Nicholas Institute at Duke University and adjunct professor at the Nicholas School of the Environment. She works on improving policy and implementation for nature-based solutions, natural capital accounting, ecosystem services, environmental markets, and climate resilience. She leads the National Ecosystem Services Partnership and spent two years with the Biden Administration at the Council on Environmental Quality as Director of Nature based Resilience.

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