October 7, 2026

Ferry Beach Retreat & Conference Center

Saco, Maine

Hosted by the Ferry Beach Retreat & Conference Center

Organizer: Peter Hanrahan

5th Annual Gulf of Maine Coastal Conference

October 7, 2026 · Ferry Beach Retreat and Conference Center, Saco, Maine

Opening General Session — Rowland Hall / Gayla Theater		
8:00 - 8:45	**Registration, Exhibits, and Continental Breakfast**	
8:45 - 9:30	**Keynote: Bouncing Forward — Transformational Approaches for Coastal Resilience in Maine** *Jessica Brunacini · Wells Reserve at Laudholm*	
9:30 - 9:45	**SOS Saco Bay Update —** *David Plavin · SOS Saco Bay*	
9:45 - 10:00	Networking break — foyer and exhibit area	
Block A - breakout sessions *Group 1 - A1 Dolphin Hall then lunch 11:00 AM · Group 2 - A2 Gayla Theater then lunch 12:00 PM*		
10:00-10:15	***SESSION A1 | Coastal Wildlife & Ecosystem Health*** | 10:00 – 10:55 AM | Dolphin Hall | Mod. by *Sienna Zuco* **Quantifying Saltmarsh & Nelson's Sparrow Reproductive Success Across Maine's Coast, 2011–2025** *McLagan, Olsen, Ruskin · UMaine / Kovach · UNH*	***SESSION A2 | Nature-Based Solutions & Restoration*** | 10:00 – 11:50 AM | Gayla Theater | Mod. by *Helena Tatgenhorst* **Case Study: Addressing Coastal Bluff Erosion with Nature-Based Solutions** *Tim Forrester · Flycatcher, LLC*
10:20-10:35	**Understanding the Impact of Sea Level Rise on Coastal Mudflats and Fisheries** *McMahan, Farr · Manomet Conservation; Oh · UMass Amherst*	**Coastal Case Studies and Lessons Learned** *Jonathan Gawrys · SumCo Eco-Contracting*
10:40-10:55	**Marine Mammal Response & Health in Maine** *Lynda Ada Doughty · Marine Mammals of Maine*	**Advancing Nature-Based Strategies in Maine's High Energy Habitats** *Dr. Jess Reilly-Moman · VHB*
11:00-11:15	**Lunch - Group 1 - Poster session 1 | Dining Hall** 11:00 - 11:50 AM	**Flood Adaptation Hierarchy: Solutions from Green to Gray** *Helena Tatgenhorst · The Nature Conservancy*
11:20-11:50		**The Latest Innovations in Salt Marsh Restoration and Other Coastal Interface Areas [30 min]** *Seth Wilkinson · WILKINSON*
Block B - parallel breakout sessions *Group 1 - B1 Dolphin Hall starts 12:00 PM · Group 2 - B2 Gayla Theater starts 12:40 PM*		
12:00-12:15	***SESSION B1 | Coastal Processes & Climate Change*** | 12:00 – 1:55 PM | Dolphin Hall | Mod. by *Jeremy Gabrielson* **Erode Awakening: Mathematically Modeling Shoreline Erosion in Saco Bay** *Emily Kelting · UNE*	**Lunch — Group 2 – Poster session 2 | Dining Hall** 12:00 – 12:40 PM
12:20-12:35	**Two Decades of Shoreline Change & Management Response at Saco Bay** *Katelyn DeWater · UNE '25*	
12:40-12:55	**Maine's Changing Coastline: UNE Research Updates from Saco Bay** *Will Kochtitzky · UNE*	***SESSION B2 | Policy, Planning & Community Resilience*** | 12:40 – 2:00 PM | Gayla Theater | Mod. by *Maggie Mills*
1:00-1:15	**What's in a Photo? Localizing Flood Data through Coastal Community Science** *Bowness, Sun, Zuco · GMRI; Barker · AmeriCorps*	**City of South Portland: Developing a Climate Resilience Overlay Zone (CROZ)** *Julie Rosenbach · City of South Portland*
1:20-1:35	**Advancing Nature-Based Strategies in Southern Maine with Tools & Community Engagement** *Jake Aman · Wells Reserve; Melanie Nash · SMPDC*	**Pumping the Brakes: Using Moratoriums as a Tool for Municipal Coastal Resilience** *Alison McKellar · Former Camden Select Board member*
1:40-1:55	**Overcoming Climate Change Indifference** *Peter M. Hanrahan*	**Emergency Preparedness for Coastal Weather Events and Older Populations** *Juliana Barrett · Connecticut Sea Grant*
All-attendees reconvene — Rowland Hall / Gayla Theater		
1:55 - 2:10	**Networking break — foyer and exhibit area**	
2:10 - 2:30	**OUR SHORE —** *Nathan Robbins, Maine Department of Environmental Protection*	
2:30 - 2:50	**1-minute organization updates** - *Speakers to sign up on the day of conference.*	
Beach field stations — Ferry Beach / Camp Ellis — Groups split & rotate · Round 1: 3:00–3:30 · Round 2: 3:30–4:00		
3:00-4:00	**Behind the Camp Ellis Spur Jetty** 1. Construction Status Update: *Jenifer Thalhauser, US Army Corps of Engineers* 2. Vendor Presentation: Construction Products & Engineering Solutions *Jeff Fiske, Industrial Fabrics Inc. (Non-Government Endorsed Vendor)*	**Coastal Processes, Living Shoreline Regulations & Cost-Effective Stabilization** *Liz Nowak, MGS · Rob Wood, ME DEP · Seth Wilkinson, WILKINSON*
Closing reception · 4:00 – 5:00 PM · Light refreshments, networking, poster session 3 | Dining Hall		

OUR SPEAKERS, MODERATORS AND PANELISTS

Keynote: Jessica Brunacini, Ph.D is Director of the Coastal Training Program at the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve. She is a coastal resilience scholar-practitioner who has nearly two decades of experience working in climate change engagement, planning, and research. In her current role, she supports communities, builds capacity, and provides technical assistance to decision-makers on adapting to the impacts of sea level rise, coastal erosion, increased flooding, and stronger, more frequent storms.

David Plavin is Vice President of Save Our Shores (SOS) Saco Bay and a strong advocate of coastal protection. He lives in the seaside community of Camp Ellis Beach in Saco, ME and works closely with local, county, state and federal government.

Session A1: Coastal Wildlife and Ecosystem Health

Moderator: Sienna Zuco is the Community Climate Action Project Manager at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. She supports community climate action through project management, storytelling, and program facilitation, working to ensure the viability and sustainability of Maine's coastal communities in the face of climate change.

Kayla McLagan is a UMaine alumna (B.S. '23) and Master of Science student in Ecology and Environmental Sciences. Her thesis focuses on STEM education and tidal marsh/saltmarsh sparrows.

Brian Olsen is an evolutionary ecologist and ornithologist at the University of Maine.

Katherine Ruskin is a Lecturer and Undergraduate Coordinator in Ecology and Environmental Sciences at the University of Maine and an Associate, Climate Change Institute.

Adrienne Kovach is a professor University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH. Her research focuses on the population ecology and conservation of vertebrates, particularly species of concern in the Northeast.

Marissa McMahan, Ph.D, is the Vice President of Fisheries at Manomet Conservation Sciences in Brunswick, ME.

Emily Farr is the Director of Fisheries Programs at Manomet Conservation Sciences in Brunswick, ME.

Ashley Oh, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, is a researcher and Ph.D. student in the Department of Earth, Geographic, and Climate Sciences. She works with the Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center.

Lynda Ada Doughty is Founding Executive Director, Marine Mammals of Maine. Her work has involved conducting whale necropsies, disentanglement, population studies, marine debris projects and sterning on lobster boats.

Session A2: Nature-Based Solutions and Restoration

Moderator: Helena Tatgenhorst is Coastal Program Manager for The Nature Conservancy in Maine, where she carries out restoration work on salt marsh, eelgrass, and shellfish habitat. She holds a BA in geosciences from Smith College and an MS in coastal and marine environments from the University of Galway.

Tim Forrester is Partner/Director of Coastal Resources at Flycatcher, LLC, a natural resource consulting firm in Yarmouth, Maine. A Professional Wetland Scientist, he works on coastal projects including marsh restoration and has presented a Yarmouth pilot marsh restoration at a Maine DEP OUR SHORE workshop.

Jonathan Gawrys is Team Lead at SumCo Eco-Contracting in Peabody, Massachusetts. He has spent more than two decades in ecological construction and restoration, focusing on living shorelines, salt marsh and bog restoration, and coastal resilience.

Dr. Jess Reilly-Moman is the Director of Environmental Services at VHB, an environmental consulting firm. She specializes in climate adaptation and resilience for Maine's coastal communities.

Helena Tatgenhorst (see A2 Moderator).

Seth Wilkinson is a Principal at Wilkinson Coastal, collaborating with a select group of accomplished engineers and consultants to deliver elite coastal wetlands permitting support for ecological restoration projects. He serves as the exclusive supplier of Wilkinsod for coastal stabilization.

Session B1: Coastal Processes and Climate Change

Moderator: Jeremy Gabrielson is Director of Conservation Planning at Maine Coast Heritage Trust, where he has worked since 2014. His work covers salt marsh protection, coastal resilience, and conservation planning grounded in spatial analysis.

Emily Kelting is Assistant Professor in the School of Mathematics and Data Science at the University of New England. She works in applied mathematics and physical oceanography, using numerical models to study coastal dynamics and estuaries.

Katelyn DeWater is a graduate student at the University of New England. She earned a BS in marine sciences from UNE in 2025, with minors in GIS and applied mathematics. A Goldwater Scholar and NSF Graduate Research Fellow, she studies sea level rise, coastal erosion, and salt marsh change in Maine.

Will Kochtitzky is Assistant Professor in the University of New England's School of Marine and Environmental Programs. His current work uses lidar and bathymetric surveys to study the Saco Bay coast, with the goal of helping communities adapt to a changing shoreline.

Gayle Bowness is the Director of Climate Action at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland, ME. She leads GMRI's Municipal Climate Action Program, which helps coastal communities plan for sea level rise and flooding.

Sienna Zuco (see Session A1).

Stephanie Sun is the Program Manager for Community Climate Action at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland, ME, where she provides coastal communities and blue economy businesses with the knowledge, tools, and confidence they need to build climate resilience.

Emma Barker is a Community Science Fellow who worked with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, where she collaborated on data collection focused on building long-term resilience of wharves and coastlines.

Jake Aman is Stewardship Director at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm, where he has worked since 2008. His work covers habitat restoration, coastal fisheries, GIS mapping, and technical support for towns planning for climate resilience.

Melanie Nash is the Sustainability and Resilience Planner at the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission. Her projects include nature-based strategy implementation, tidal data collection and analysis, grid resilience planning, and implementation of climate resilience strategies for municipalities.

Peter M. Hanrahan is an environmental consultant based in Topsham, ME. A Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control (CPESC), he specializes in the science of surface erosion and sediment control, and has worked on coastal mitigation projects throughout New England.

Session B2: Policy, Planning and Community Resilience

Moderator: Maggie Mills is the Senior Project Manager and Business Development Director at FB Environmental in Portland, ME.

Julie Rosenbach is Sustainability Director for the City of South Portland. She led development of One Climate Future, the joint climate plan for Portland and South Portland, and is now working on the city's Climate Resilience Overlay Zone for coastal flooding and sea level rise.

Alison McKellar served on the Camden Select Board from 2017 to 2026, including as vice chair. She has advocated for removing dams on the Megunticook River to restore fish passage and has served on the town's conservation commission and budget committee.

Juliana Barrett is Extension Educator Emerita and coastal habitat specialist with Connecticut Sea Grant and UConn Extension. Her work centers on conserving and restoring Connecticut's coastal habitats and on helping communities adapt to climate change.

Afternoon Session: OUR SHORE

Nathan Robbins is a Climate Change Specialist with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. He works on climate adaptation and community resilience, including DEP's Climate Change and Adaptation Toolkit and the Maine Climate Hub.

Beach Field Stations

Jenifer Thalhauser is Project Manager and Chief of Navigation for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District. She manages the Camp Ellis Beach Shore Damage Mitigation Project in Saco.

Jeff Fiske is Vice President of Business Development at Industrial Fabrics, Inc., in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The company supplies geosynthetic and coastal protection products, including fabric containers, marine mattresses, and turbidity barriers, for shoreline protection, breakwaters, and erosion control.

Liz Nowak is Coastal Hazard Specialist at the Maine Geological Survey. Her work covers beach erosion, sea level change, and bluff and landslide hazards along the Maine coast.

Rob Wood is Director of the Bureau of Land Resources at the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. The bureau runs the department's land permitting and oversight programs, including shoreland zoning, the Natural Resources Protection Act, stormwater management, and erosion control.

Seth Wilkinson (see Session A2).

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