

Janine Adams

Janine Adams is a distinguished professor at the Nelson Mandela University (South Africa) and Deputy Director of the Institute for Coastal and Marine Research. She occupies the national Research Chair for Shallow Water Ecosystems. Her research focusses on the conservation and management of coastal ecosystems working across the science-policy-practice continuum. Ongoing research is investigating blue carbon ecosystems (salt marsh, mangroves, seagrasses) and responses to climate change, as well as coastal water quality management. Action research is implemented to inform the restoration of estuaries for the delivery of multiple ecosystem services. Janine has published over 280 journal articles, as well as several book chapters and technical reports. She is passionate about research training and capacity building and has graduated 48 Masters and 28 PhD students. In 2023 Janine received the Department of Science and Innovation - South African Woman in Science Award as distinguished women researcher in the Natural and Engineering Sciences category for her outstanding contribution to building the country's scientific and research knowledge base. Janine is senior editor of the journal Coastal Futures (Cambridge University Press), Chair of the Western Indian Ocean Mangrove Network, member of the International Blue Carbon Science Working Group (Conservation International, IUCN and UNESCO collaboration) and a member of the UN Ocean Decade Programme for Blue Carbon (science technical working group).

Senne Aertbeliën

My work focuses on marine environmental policy at the intersection of marine litter, underwater radiated noise, and nature restoration. I developed Belgium's vision on nature restoration and currently oversee the follow-up of restoration projects across the country. In parallel, I serve as the Nature Track Lead within the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative, helping to strengthen regional cooperation on ecosystem conservation and restoration. I also bring experience in international marine governance, including currently serving as co-convenor of the OSPAR Marine Litter Group and participating in the negotiations for the global plastics treaty.

Jamil Ahmad

Chief of Service, New York Office (NYO)

Biography

Mr. Jamil Ahmad, is Director at the UNEP New York. He is leads work on sustainable development and the environment in support of the organization's policies and programme.

As an advocate of sustainability, he regularly engages with think tanks, universities, and research institutes, speaks to civil society groups, official delegations, students and other stakeholders about environment, climate change and sustainable development. He has been representing the UN Environment Programme in international events.

He joined UN Environment in 2008 as the Secretary for the Governing Bodies based in Nairobi, Kenya (2008-14). He directed, managed and coordinated the Secretariat, led the organization of the sessions of the Governing Bodies and served as the focal point of UN Environment's external relations.

A senior career diplomat, Mr. Jamil Ahmad entered the Foreign Service of Pakistan in 1986 and has worked in several duty stations in Asia, Europe and Africa with rich experience of bilateral and multilateral affairs. He participated in numerous important UN and other intergovernmental meetings, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, the Commission of Sustainable Development (CSD) and the Governing Councils of UNEP, UN-HABITAT and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). He was lead negotiator of the Group of 77 & China for Climate Change under Pakistan's chairmanship in 2007 culminating at COP13 to UNFCCC in Bali in 2007.

Mr. Jamil Ahmad holds a Master's Degree in Political Science.

Lorenzo Alvarez-Filip

Dr. Lorenzo Álvarez Filip — Marine Scientist, UNAM

Dr. Lorenzo Álvarez Filip is a senior researcher at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), where he has spent over two decades studying the coral reefs of the Mexican Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. His work sits at the intersection of science and management: understanding how these ecosystems are changing, and what governments and institutions can do to protect them before the window for action closes.

With over 100 peer-reviewed publications and more than 9,000 citations, Dr. Álvarez Filip is an influential coral reef scientist. His contributions have been recognised with a Fellowship from the International Society for Reef Studies — the field's leading scientific organisation. His findings have shaped climate and biodiversity policy at both national and international levels and reached global audiences through outlets such as The Guardian, The Washington Post, and CNN.

Beyond the lab, he advises government agencies on marine biodiversity and protected area management and serves on international scientific bodies that guide conservation policy such as the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network and the Redlist of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). He has also trained more than 30 scientists who now work in universities, conservation organisations, and environmental agencies across Mexico and abroad.

Karina Barquet

Dr. Karina Barquet is a Senior Research Fellow and Team Lead for Water, Coasts and Oceans at the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), where she also leads the institute's global work on oceans and biodiversity. Her research focuses on the governance of water, coastal and marine systems, including ecosystems, critical infrastructures, and environmental risks. She develops systems-based and collaborative approaches like Living Labs to strengthen the implementation of ecosystem restoration and resilience-building initiatives. In the Caribbean, her work supports coral reef and coastal wetland restoration through multi-stakeholder partnerships that connect ecological objectives with local livelihoods and governance arrangements. In the Baltic Sea region, she has focused on nature-based adaptation to coastal hazards, marine spatial planning, and the governance of multifunctional and geopolitically sensitive seascapes. Her work bridges research, policy, and practice to support long-term stewardship of coastal and marine environments.

Ranjeet Bhagooli

Dr Bhagooli is a full Professor at the University of Mauritius, an Adjunct Professor at Diponegoro University, Indonesia and an Associate Fellow under the Institute of Oceanography and Environment at the Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia. He holds an MSc in Biology, Chemistry and Marine Science, and a PhD in Marine and Environmental Sciences from the University of Ryukyus, Okinawa, Japan. He was a Post-Doctoral Research Associate at University of Miami, RSMAS, Florida, USA, and Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Technology, Sydney & University of Tasmania, Australia. He has extensive research experiences in tropical, subtropical, and polar seas looking at effects of climate change on marine ecosystems. He leads the Pole of Research Excellence (PRE) in Sustainable Marine Biodiversity Research Group at UoM. He has so far published over 125 peer-reviewed international articles, international conference papers and book chapters. He is one of the Councillors for the International Coral Reefs Society (ICRS). He was conferred the World Reef Award in 2018 and Coral Reef Conservation Award in 2026 by ICRS. He holds Fellow and/or Chartered Scientists status at several national and international bodies.

Kristina Boerder

Dr. Kristina Boerder, originally from Germany, is a marine biologist and Senior Research Scientist at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada. She works in the Future of Marine Ecosystems Laboratory under the leadership of Dr. Derek Tittensor, where her research focuses on marine conservation and the impacts of human activities and climate change on marine biodiversity and coastal ecosystems. Dr. Boerder holds a PhD in marine conservation, which underpins her expertise in ecosystem dynamics, biodiversity assessment, and evidence-based environmental management.

She is currently the scientific lead of the Community Eelgrass Restoration Initiative (CERI), a collaborative program aimed at restoring eelgrass meadows across Nova Scotia. Her work integrates scientific research, community engagement, and policy-relevant outcomes to evaluate the ecological and socio-environmental benefits of eelgrass habitats. This includes assessing their critical role in supporting marine biodiversity, enhancing blue carbon storage, and strengthening coastal resilience in the face of environmental change.

Dr. Boerder is recognized for her interdisciplinary approach, combining rigorous scientific analysis with practical conservation strategies. Her work contributes to advancing sustainable marine management and informing conservation policy at regional and broader scales.

Laura Bowie

Laura Bowie
Executive Director
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Laura Bowie serves as the Executive Director for the Gulf of America Alliance, a partnership of the five Gulf States with the goal to significantly increase regional collaboration to enhance the ecological and economic health of the Gulf of America.

Laura began her career in Houston, Texas, at Texas Eastern Pipeline Company and served Continental Airlines as a Senior Manager in the Environmental Affairs Department. Since moving to Mississippi, Laura has supported local non-profits spear-heading watershed and grant programs.

In 2010, Laura was the first employee hired by the Gulf Alliance to take the loose network of partners into a formal not-for-profit organization. Since taking the helm in 2013, Laura has led the organization through significant accomplishments, including:

- (1) building the participation in the organization to over 1000 people actively involved in various committees and working groups;
- (2) the development of three organizational Action Plans supported and signed off on by all five Gulf State governors; and
- (4) the launch of Gulf Star, a public-private grant program supported by Gulf industries and public agencies alike.

Laura holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Mississippi State University and a master's degree in environmental management from the University of Houston. Laura is active in local civic and charitable organizations. She and her husband John have been married 27 years and have two grown and married sons, Andrew and Mitchell.

RESEÑA BIOGRÁFICA

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Nombre del expositor: Verónica Cáceres2. Institución: Convención Interamericana para la Protección y Conservación de las Tortugas Marinas (CIT)3. País: Estados Unidos4. Cargo: Secretaria5. Correo electrónico de contacto: secretario@iacseaturtle.org	
<p>ENGLISH:</p> <p>MSc. Verónica Cáceres Chamorro serves as Secretary of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), where she leads regional cooperation among government agencies in 16 countries in the Western Hemisphere to reduce threats to sea turtles through coordinated policy action and science-based management. A biologist trained at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua and a Fulbright scholar with a master’s degree in Fisheries Science from the University of Maryland, she specializes in integrating scientific advice into public policy. With more than 18 years of international intergovernmental experience across environmental, fisheries, academic, and civil society sectors, she has guided regional initiatives on best practices for handling incidentally captured sea turtles, the training for the use of turtle excluder devices in trawl fisheries in Central America, the development of standardized monitoring protocols for nesting beaches and sea turtle hatcheries, monitoring of environmental parameters for the impact of climate change on sea turtle habitats, local capacity building to reduce illegal hawksbill trade, and development of national sea turtle conservation strategies in the IAC member countries, — efforts that have contributed to one of the most comprehensive sea turtle nesting databases in the region. She has co-authored over 20 technical documents with the IAC Technical Committees and has advanced technical collaboration strengthening sea turtle protection measures through Memoranda of Understanding with regional and global organizations such as IATTC, ICCAT, RAMSAR, and CPPS.</p> <p>She currently coordinates 12 IAC working groups focused on strengthening member-country capacity to mitigate sea threats. Her multisectoral, science-</p>	

driven approach has positioned the IAC as a leading platform for dialogue and collective action in marine biodiversity conservation.

ESPAÑOL

MSc. Verónica Cáceres Chamorro se desempeña como Secretaria de la **Convención Interamericana para la Protección y Conservación de las Tortugas Marinas (CIT)**, donde lidera la cooperación regional entre agencias gubernamentales de 16 países del Hemisferio Occidental para reducir las amenazas a las tortugas marinas mediante acciones de política coordinada y manejo basado en la ciencia. Licenciada en Biología de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua y becaria Fulbright con una maestría en Ciencias Pesqueras de la Universidad de Maryland en los Estados Unidos, se especializa en integrar el asesoramiento científico en la política pública.

Con más de 18 años de experiencia en la coordinación intergubernamental en los sectores ambiental, pesquero, académico y de la sociedad civil, ha dirigido iniciativas regionales para avanzar el uso de mejores prácticas para la manipulación de tortugas marinas capturadas incidentalmente, capacitación para el uso de dispositivos excluidores de tortugas en pesquerías de arrastre en Centroamérica, desarrollo de protocolos estandarizados de monitoreo para playas de anidación y viveros de tortugas marinas, monitoreo de parámetros ambientales para evaluar el impacto del cambio climático en los hábitats de tortugas marinas, fortalecimiento de capacidades locales para reducir el comercio ilegal de carey y elaboración de estrategias nacionales de conservación de tortugas marinas en los países miembros de la Convención. Estos esfuerzos han contribuido a una de las bases de datos de anidación de tortugas marinas más completas de la región y a fortalecer las leyes que protegen a las tortugas marinas y sus hábitats en los países miembros de la CIT.

Ha contribuido en más de 20 documentos técnicos junto con los Comités Técnicos de la CIT y ha impulsado la colaboración técnica fortaleciendo las medidas de protección a las tortugas marinas mediante Memorando de Entendimiento con organizaciones regionales y globales como CIAT, ICCAT, RAMSAR y CPPS.

Actualmente coordina 12 grupos de trabajo de la CIT enfocados en fortalecer las capacidades de los países miembros para mitigar las amenazas a las tortugas marinas. Su enfoque multisectorial y basado en la ciencia ha posicionado a la CIT como una plataforma líder para el diálogo y la acción colectiva en la conservación de la biodiversidad marina.

Dao Viet Ha

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dao Viet Ha is Director of the Institute of Oceanography (IO), Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology (VAST), the highest advisory agency of Viet Nam on oceanography; and incumbent Chairwoman of the Viet Nam on Intergovernmental Oceanography Committee (IOC-VN); member of Legal and Technique Commission (LTC) of International Seabed Authority (ISA) 2023-2027.

Holding a PhD in Aquatic and Life Science from the University of Tokyo, Japan, Assoc. Prof. Dao Viet Ha has contributed significantly to the development and international integration of Vietnam's marine science. Under her scientific leadership, numerous national and international research projects have been carried out, and she has published more than 150 international peer-reviewed scientific papers. As Dean of Marine Science and Technology, Graduate University of Science and Technology of Viet Nam, she has played a critical role in nurturing and growing future marine scientists.

Owen Day

Short BIO for Dr Owen John Day

Dr Owen Day is the co-founder and Executive Director of CLEAR Caribbean, a non-profit working at the nexus of sustainable livelihoods and ecosystem-based adaptation across the Eastern Caribbean. He obtained his Bachelors in biochemistry from Oxford University in 1988, and his master's and doctorate in marine biology from the University of Wales in 1991 and 1996 respectively. He has over 25 years' experience implementing projects in the Caribbean with a focus on climate change adaptation and strengthening the resilience of coastal ecosystems and communities. He has worked closely with governments, the private sector, and local communities to develop and implement new approaches to reduce vulnerability and support livelihoods, adaptation strategies and the management of coastal and marine ecosystems. His work spans a wide range of partners and donors including UNDP, UNE, World Bank, IADB, CDB, GIZ, USAID, UKAID, CBF, IAF and private foundations. He is currently leading a consortium of organisations implementing long-term Ecosystem-based Adaptation programme in St Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines. This work is supporting climate-smart agriculture and the largest community-based coral restoration in the Eastern Caribbean. It is mostly funded by the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund and supported by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety through the International Climate Initiative and KfW.

Bruna Rodrigues Debastiani

Bruna Rodrigues Debastiani is a Brazilian marine ecologist with a background in Biology and a Master's degree in Environmental Sciences and Conservation. Her work focuses on the sustainability of marine ecosystems, with emphasis on nature-based solutions, coastal resilience, and blue carbon, particularly in the context of ecosystem restoration.

She has professional experience working across a diversity of coastal environments, including sandy beaches, rocky shores, and mangrove ecosystems. This multidisciplinary experience has shaped her perspective on coastal dynamics and the ecological processes that connect land and ocean systems. Her work combines field-based science and applied environmental approaches, contributing to ecosystem monitoring, environmental assessment, and the understanding of coastal ecosystem functioning and management.

In recent years, through her work with OceanPact Maritime Services, Bruna has increasingly focused on mangrove ecosystems, recognizing their critical role in carbon sequestration, biodiversity support, human well-being, and climate change mitigation. Within the framework of ecosystem restoration, her work explores how mangroves can be effectively restored and conserved through nature-based solutions, generating both ecological and climate benefits.

Her work is guided by a strong interest in nature-based solutions and the real-world environmental challenges. As a Brazilian, Bruna brings a Global South perspective to international discussions on ocean sustainability, climate resilience, ecosystem restoration, and nature-based solutions, contributing to global efforts aimed to build a more equitable, science-based, and sustainable relationship between people and the environment.

Nicola Ferri

Nicola Ferri (Mr) holds a PhD in International Law and currently serves as Senior Legal and Compliance Adviser at the GFCM. International lawyer with strong specialization in ocean governance and over twenty years of professional experience in major global organizations and fora. His areas of expertise include blue economy (at international, regional and national levels), design and implementation of capacity-building projects and application of monitoring, control and surveillance technologies. Furthermore, he has deep familiarity with the BBNJ Agreement and the work of the GEF under the International Waters focal area. Dr Ferri has authored several peer-reviewed publications on various international law topics.

Kim Friedman

Bio Short:

Dr Kim Friedman (Kim.Friedman@fao.org) is a Senior Fishery Resources Officer in FAO's Fisheries and Aquaculture Division. He leads the FishFinder programme and serves as focal point for CBD, CITES and SIDS. Kim holds a BSc (Hons), a Master's in Aquaculture and Fisheries, and a PhD from James Cook University. His career spans aquaculture, fisheries science and policy across Australia and the Pacific, including pearl oyster research with WorldFish and senior fishery and environment authority roles in Western Australia. He has led regional invertebrate fisheries assessments across more than 20 Pacific Island countries and territories, and most recently developed monitoring frameworks linking ecosystem condition, pressures and management responses.

Bio Extended:

Dr Kim Friedman (Kim.Friedman@fao.org) is a Senior Fishery Resources Officer with the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Kim leads the FishFinder program and is the Fisheries and Aquaculture Divisions focal point for Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), CITES and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Kim joined FAO with extensive experience leading fisheries and environmental research programmes across Australia and the Pacific.

Kim holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Marine Biology and a Master's degree in Aquaculture and Fisheries, and was awarded a PhD from James Cook University in Queensland, Australia.

Following undergraduate studies and early experience in salmon aquaculture in Scotland, and a short period with New South Wales Fisheries in Australia, Kim joined ICLARM (now WorldFish), where he led research programmes in the western Pacific for over four years, working in the Solomon Islands and Fiji. This research formed the basis of his doctoral work and helped establish Fiji's pearl industry. He later joined the Western Australian Fisheries Department as a Senior Research Scientist, supporting the management of key commercial fisheries, including abalone, pearl oyster and sea cucumber.

In the early 2000s, Kim returned to the Pacific, leading surveys and stock assessments of subsistence, artisanal and commercial coastal invertebrate fisheries across 23 Pacific

Island countries and territories. This work provided the first region-wide assessment of the status of commercially exploited inshore species, and established critical baseline data for subsistence fisheries, which had previously been largely unquantified.

Prior to joining FAO, Kim worked within the Western Australian Marine Science Program at the Department of Parks and Wildlife, where he established and led a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework linking ecosystem condition assessments with pressures and management responses. This work advanced the use of condition–pressure–response models to build time-series understanding and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of marine resource management and conservation.

Daniel Friess

Bio

Dan Friess is the Cochran Family Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences, and Director of the Center for Public Policy Research at Tulane University. His research includes mangrove and seagrass blue carbon dynamics, how mangroves respond to deforestation and climate change, and how we can improve the success of mangrove restoration. Much of Dan's research has been conducted in Southeast Asia, where he was previously based at the National University of Singapore. Dan is a member of the IUCN Mangrove Specialist Group, the Global Mangrove Alliance, and the Blue Carbon Initiative Scientific Working Group. For more information please visit www.themangrovelab.com.

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Boze Hancock

Brief Bio – Boze Hancock, PhD.

Boze Hancock (PhD) is the Senior Marine Restoration Scientist for TNC's Massachusetts chapter. Boze comes from a fisheries research background in Western Australia but has spent >20 years based in the US developing restoration of the critical coastal habitats around the US, as well as in China, Hong Kong, Australia and Europe. He provides technical support for numerous projects, science support- particularly through quantifying the benefits these habitats provide, and has a focus on scaling marine restoration. Recent interests include restorative aquaculture and the biodiversity net gain potential of habitat restoration associated with ocean industries. In 2020 Boze initiated the SOAR (Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration) program in the US (www.nature.org/SOAR) to involve oyster growers in conservation. Boze is also actively developing techniques to scale restoration through integrating oyster reef restoration into the construction of offshore wind infrastructure in Europe. This represents the first habitat restoration in the mesophotic zone, a large, degraded area of high restoration potential and an area for future development with the offshore wind industry.

Sevvandi Jayakody

Prof. Sevvandi Jayakody is the Chair Professor of the Department of Aquaculture and Fisheries at the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka. She holds a First Class Honours BSc in Zoology from the University of Kelaniya, a Postgraduate Diploma in Wildlife Management from India, and a PhD in Zoology from the University of Aberdeen, UK. Her postdoctoral background includes applied research at CSIRO (Australia), the James Hutton Institute (UK), and IDRC (Canada).

She serves as Vice Chair for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Convention on Wetland and is a member of the Commonwealth Blue Charter and the Blue Carbon Initiative. Locally, Prof. Jayakody chairs the Marine Environment Council and the National Mangrove Expert Committee. She also serves on the National Blue Carbon Task Force. She is currently serving on the Wildlife & Nature Protection Society board.

Her research evaluates marine taxonomy, ecosystem governance, and human impacts on coastal environments. She is the national advisor to Accelerated Natural Regeneration of Mangroves projects in Sri Lanka. In relation to capacity building, she currently supervises twelve postgraduate scholars.

Xiaohong Li

Ms. Xiaohong Li is the Representative, New York Liaison Office, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Prior to this role, she subsequently served as section chiefs at the corruption branch and organized crime branch at UNODC.

Ms. Li has served as the Secretary or Deputy Secretary for various intergovernmental meeting bodies addressing crime and corruption. She has also led teams in delivering legal advisory service and technical assistance to Member States on drugs, organized crime and corruption.

Before joining the United Nations system, Ms. Li worked at the Ministry of Justice of China.

Ms. Li holds a bachelor's degree in law from China, as well as two master's degrees in law -- one from China and another the United Kingdom.

Margaret Miller

Margaret W. Miller is the Chief Science Officer for SECORE International, a conservation nonprofit dedicated to creating and sharing tools and technologies to sustainably restore coral reefs worldwide. She leads SECORE's research strategy focused on improving success of coral seeding, fosters research collaborations with scientific partners, and oversees field research teams based in Curaçao, Mexico, and Mauritius. She has an undergraduate degree from Indiana University and a doctorate in marine ecology from UNC-Chapel Hill and previously served 19 years as a Research Ecologist with NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Science Center. She currently serves on the advisory US Acropora Recovery Implementation Team (ARIT) and on international expert working groups on coral restoration genetics and coral larval propagation under the Coral Restoration Consortium. Margaret grew up and learned to SCUBA dive in southern Indiana, USA. She currently resides in North Carolina, USA.

Rory O'Leary

Head of Marine Strategic Policy in the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, Government of Ireland. Responsible for developing and maintaining a strategic marine policy and legislative framework; leading cross-government and external engagement (national and international) on strategic marine policy issues; developing and implementing marine legislation and overseeing outreach, engagement and citizen activation measures.

Ellen Pikitch

Dr. Ellen Pikitch

Biography

Dr. Ellen Pikitch is the Founder and Executive Director for the Institute for Ocean Conservation Science and is the Inaugural Endowed Professor of Ocean Conservation Science at Stony Brook University. Ellen is an award-winning scientist, conservationist, and communicator who has transformed the way the ocean is perceived and managed. Her contributions have resulted in scientific innovations, fisheries management improvements, and domestic and international policy change.

Dr. Pikitch's current areas of focus include marine protected areas (MPAs), the use of eDNA technology to assess biodiversity, fisheries management, and the protection of endangered and threatened species. She serves as co-PI of the Shinnecock Bay Restoration Program, which successfully eliminated harmful algal blooms, revived a now thriving and economically important clam fishery, and increased the biodiversity and abundance of aquatic life in the bay. Shinnecock Bay was designated as a global Hope Spot by Mission Blue in 2022.

Dr. Pikitch is a Fellow of AAAS, a Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation, a Mission Blue Hope Spot Champion and a Fellow of The Explorers Club. Other honors received include the Oscar E. Sette award, the Freudenthal Award for Excellence in Science, and the Lowell Thomas Medal. She has authored more than 200 scientific and popular articles and edited two books.

Dr. Pikitch earned bachelor's and master's degrees from City College of New York, and her doctoral degree from Indiana University. Prior to joining the faculty of Stony Brook University she held positions at several academic institutions and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Chanel Raynor

Biography of Ms. Chanel Raynor

Coordinator-Ecosystems

National Environment and Planning Agency

Ms. Chanel Raynor is a marine resource management specialist dedicated to the conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems. She has over nine years of professional experience and holds a Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology from the University of the West Indies. Additionally, Chanel earned a Professional Engineering Master's degree in Ocean Science from the University of Science and Technology in South Korea, strengthening her expertise in shoreline management, ecosystem restoration, and marine resource sustainability.

In her current role at the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), Chanel coordinates the Agency's conservation and monitoring programmes related to coral reefs, wetlands and seagrass beds.

She also provides technical expertise to the development and implementation of nationally, regionally, and internationally funded projects focused on marine and coastal ecosystem management, restoration, and climate resilience.

As one of Jamaica's focal points for the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), a leading global partnership for coral reef conservation, she plays a key role in advancing coral reef protection and restoration efforts at both national and international levels. She also serves as Jamaica's focal point for the Ramsar Convention's Youth Working Group, supporting youth engagement and capacity-building initiatives for wetland conservation and sustainable management.

Chanel's proactive approach, extensive technical knowledge, and commitment to sustainable marine resource management continue to contribute to the protection and restoration of Jamaica's marine environment while supporting broader regional and global conservation initiatives.

Greg Reynolds

Greg Reynolds is an Australian lawyer and diplomat, currently serving at Australia's Permanent Mission to the UN, where he leads engagement on ocean stewardship, climate change, environmental protection, and disaster risk reduction. His work focuses on strengthening international cooperation to build climate and community resilience through the protection, restoration and adaptive management of marine and coastal ecosystems. An experienced multilateral negotiator, his work aims to strengthen collective action under accelerating global environmental pressures. During Australia's role leading negotiations on the declaration "Our ocean, our future: united for urgent action", adopted at the 2025 UN Ocean Conference, his work to advance ocean stewardship and SDG 14 implementation through synthesising research and policy across General Assembly members, the UN system and civil society was instrumental to elevating global ambition.

Elizabeth Sinclair

Dr Elizabeth Sinclair

Dr Sinclair is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia.

She is a career scientist, using DNA-based methods for conservation, management and restoration of threatened and endangered species and ecosystems. After completing a PhD in wildlife conservation genetics, she spent 6 years as a post-doctoral researcher in the USA. On returning to Australia, she has focused on marine plants, the seagrasses.

Her research studies spatial patterns of genetic diversity in temperate seagrasses to understand the processes impacting marine connectivity across the Australian continental shelf. Her research outcomes have direct implications for conservation, management and how to improve resilience in restored seagrass meadows under changing climate. She partnered with Malgana Aboriginal Corporation Rangers to develop methods to restore seagrass meadows in Gathaagudu (Shark Bay), Malgana Sea Country, following an extreme heatwave.

She has published extensively on conservation genetics and marine restoration. Her publications include rediscovering the world's rarest marsupial (Gilbert's Potoroo) and discovering the World's largest plant (a large seagrass clone). She has served on the board for the Western Australian branch of the Australian Marine Science Association, was an inaugural member of the Seagrass Restoration Network (now Australasian Coastal Restoration Network) and was a contributing author to the United Nations Second World Ocean Assessment (WOAII).

David Smith

Dr David C. Smith david.smith03@uwi.edu

David C. Smith coordinates the Institute for Sustainable Development at The University of the West Indies (UWI). His Ph.D. is in Zoology and he works on environmental management, managing disaster risk and the effects of climate on sustainable development and human wellbeing. He is a member of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, chairing the Caribbean region.

He was one of the designers of the National Park system in Jamaica and ran a not-for-profit organization that helped to establish the Montego Bay Marine Park and was delegated by the Government of Jamaica to manage the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park, which has since been designated a World Heritage site. He was a Regional Councillor of IUCN, the World Conservation Union and a member of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas. He worked with the UNDP multi-country office in Jamaica and coordinated UN responses to Hurricanes affecting Jamaica, The Bahamas, The Cayman Islands, and The Turks and Caicos Islands. He has worked on several Caribbean projects to build resilience to seismic and climate-related hazards and reduce disaster risk.

He is currently a member of the UN High Level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs and was one of the Independent Group of Scientists that authored the [Global Sustainable Development Report 2019](#).

Mark Spalding

Mark J. Spalding (J.D., M.P.I.A.) is an expert on international ocean policy and law, blue economy finance, and the ocean–climate nexus, and has been President of The Ocean Foundation since 2003. Practicing law and advising governments since 1986, he brings combined training in law (Loyola Law School) and international environmental affairs (UC San Diego) to questions spanning the law of the sea, marine biodiversity, and sustainable ocean governance.

Spalding serves as a Senior Fellow at the Center for the Blue Economy, a member of the UNEP Guidance Working Group for its Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Initiative, and an Advisor to the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, for which he is a co-lead author of a 2025 "blue paper" on the future of ocean economy employment. He played a key role in drafting the "Nairobi Statement of Intent on Advancing a Sustainable Blue Economy." With over fifteen years of finance and investment experience, he advises several ocean-centric investment funds and co-created SeaGrass Grow, the world's first blue carbon offset program.

His work bridges natural and cultural marine resources, from integrating underwater cultural heritage into conservation to addressing the legal and financial challenges posed by potentially polluting wrecks. He served on the Sargasso Sea Commission (2015–2024) and on the U.S. National Academies' Ocean Studies Board and its committee for the UN Decade of Ocean Science (2018–2023), giving him sustained experience in high-seas and multilateral ocean governance.

James Strong

Dr James Strong (National Oceanography Centre, UK)

James is a marine ecologist and leader of the Seafloor Ecosystems Group at the National Oceanography Centre. His research focuses on the mapping and spatial modelling of seabed species and habitats using optical and acoustic remote sensing, combined with ground-truthing data, to support marine habitat mapping, landscape ecology, and management. He previously served a full six-year term as Chair of the ICES Working Group on Marine Habitat Mapping, receiving an ICES Service Award, and remains an active member. He is also co-chair of the European Marine Board Working Group on Marine Habitat Mapping.

James' broader interests include habitat connectivity, cumulative impacts, and climate change pressures in marine ecosystems. Earlier in his career at Queen's University Belfast, he led several restoration-focused projects, including EU INTERREG work on restoring native oyster populations in Carlingford Lough and the Modiolus Restoration Research Project in Strangford Lough. These projects investigated habitat decline, restoration and transplant techniques, stock enhancement, and habitat suitability modelling for ecologically important bivalve reefs.

Liana Talaue McManus

A biological oceanographer, Liana Talaue McManus spent over 30 years in the academe as faculty of the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute and of the University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine & Atmospheric Science. She pioneered the use of participatory approaches for integrated coastal planning and resource management in the Philippines in the 1980s. She facilitated the co- design of the first local coastal development plan in the Philippines and its successful legislation in 1998. In Southeast Asia, she assessed the South China Sea as a transboundary large marine ecosystem and coordinated 7 coastal states to identify the socioeconomic root causes of a degrading marginal sea by 2000. In 2012, she began work as an Independent Scientist. Her first project was a global assessment of 756 international waters – from aquifers to the open ocean -- using quantitative indicators. Among the latter, the nutrient indicators have been incorporated in gauging progress towards healthy oceans through SDG14. This global project was followed by a regional one that examined the Wider Caribbean Sea and formulated a Nutrient Reduction Strategy that was endorsed by signatories of the Cartagena Convention. Currently, she is lead scientist in reassessing the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand LMEs under a changing climate. Having worked at local to global scales, Talaue McManus is mindful that stakeholder participation in an inclusive and just policy context, is as critical as the science in finding sustainable solutions to wicked environmental problems.

Mark Vermeij

Biosketch

Dr. Mark Vermeij obtained his PhD at the University of Amsterdam. Since then Dr. Vermeij has worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Miami and Hawaii, and is now the science director at CARMABI on Curacao. Since 1955, CARMABI facilitates fieldwork of approximately 250 visiting researchers a year resulting in more than 35 scientific publications annually. In addition to research, CARMABI advises (Caribbean) governments and NGO's on nature conservation, manages several natural parks itself (including an underwater park) and runs an educational program for local schoolchildren. Vermeij is also a professor at the Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics (IBED) at the University of Amsterdam where his research focusses on the dynamics of coral reef communities around the world across all spatial scales of organization, including microbial, genetic and metabolomic approaches. Being permanently based "in the field" in Curacao, he has first hand experience on the issues arising from small islands wanting to develop their economy and protect their marine resources at the same time.