

# Program



Soil and Water Conservation Society

SOUTHERN  
NEW ENGLAND  
CHAPTER

## 2024 WINTER CONFERENCE

Collaborative Restoration

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2024**  
**8:00 AM - 4:30 PM**

Crowne Plaza Hotel- Plaza Ballroom  
801 Greenwich Avenue  
Warwick, RI 02886

<https://swcssnec.org/snec-2024-winter-conference/>

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### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Contact [jc@swcssnec.org](mailto:jc@swcssnec.org) with any questions.

Thank you to the SWCS SNEC Board of Directors for organizing this event.

**We would not be able to host educational events like this without the support of our 2024 Sponsors.**

Learn more and get involved at <https://swcssnec.org/become-a-sponsor/>.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**2 ADDITIONAL  
INFORMATION**

**3 EVENT OVERVIEW**

**4 AGENDA**

**5 SNEC ABOUT US**

**6 - 11 SPEAKER  
BIOGRAPHIES**

**12 EXHIBITORS**

**13 VENUE INFORMATION**

## EVENT OVERVIEW

**Soil and Water Conservation Society Southern New England Chapter (SWCS SNEC) is thrilled to be hosting our Winter Conference in Rhode Island.**

SWCS Southern New England Chapter is taking a soup-to-nuts look at restoration projects focused on improving resiliency and repairing damage cause by humans. One such project will be used as a case study for permitting as an Ecological Restoration Limited Project under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. Another envisions a Main Street corridor that improves the environment, the community, and the economy through use of green infrastructure, driven by partnerships between local and state agencies and private property owners.

### **CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS**

For attendees who attend the full day, a Certificate of Attendance will be provided to document six (6) hours of educational contact. Attendees must sign in AND sign out to receive full credit. Certificates will be emailed out following the event.

SWCS SNEC organizes a winter conference, a summer meeting and tour, and several fall erosion and sediment control field days annually. These educational gatherings aim to foster conservation practices in our region, providing networking and professional development opportunities

We hope that you find value in attending these events and make the most of the opportunity to connect with fellow conservation professionals and students. Thank you for being part of this enriching experience!



*SNEC SWCS Field Day - Westerly 2023*

8:00 AM - Registration | Exhibits & Networking

9:00 AM - Welcome and Opening Remarks

9:10 AM - Christine Odiaga, Assistant Project Manager, Friends of Herring River | "Herring River Tidal Restoration Project – a WPA Ecological Restoration Limited Project Case Study"

9:40 AM - Meagan Eagle, Research Physical Scientist, US Geological Survey | "Blue carbon consequences of salt marsh restoration: Carbon and greenhouse gas budgets of the Herring River restoration"

10:10 AM - Melissa Kaplan, License and Permitting Team Lead, and Tom Groves, Senior Botanist, BSC Group | "A Special Wetland, Eversource Energy's Atlantic White Cedar Mitigation Project –The 1st Year"

10:40 AM - Morning Break

11:00 AM - Alison Kocek, Wildlife Biologist Coastal Program, and Jonah Saitz, Biologist Coastal Program, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service | "Tidal marsh restoration planning and monitoring for at-risk Saltmarsh Sparrows"

11:30 AM - Joe Manetta, University of Rhode Island | "Distribution and Variability of Blue Carbon in Tidal Marsh Soils of Southern New England"

12:00 PM - Bill Giuliano, Cranberry Bog Restoration Program Manager, Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game Division of Ecological Restoration | "Making Wetland from Cranberries"

12:30 PM - Lunch | Exhibits & Networking

\*\*Be sure to stop by the SNEC table to learn more about ways to get involved!

1:30 PM - Beth Kirmmse, Project Manager, Fuss & O'Neill | "Resilient Riverfront Renewal: The transformation of Westerly's Main Street Corridor"

2:00 PM - Nicolette Nelson, Project Manager, University of Connecticut | "Lessons learned with a novel salt marsh restoration method: optimizing hummock design at Great Meadows Marsh"

2:30 PM - Afternoon Break

2:50 PM - Wenley Ferguson, Director of Habitat Restoration, Save the Bay, Melissa Hayden, State Biologist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rock Singewald, Warren Land Conservation Trust | "Partnering with NRCS to preserve and restore a salt marsh migration corridor"

3:40 PM - Closing Remarks

4:00 PM - Return name badges | Submit surveys



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## ABOUT US

**SWCS SNEC is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to promote and advance all phases of the science of conservation of soil, water, and all related resources. We aim to assist all students and professionals in the conservation field.**

If you are looking for an opportunity to share your passion and talents we at SNEC want to enthusiastically welcome you to become a member!

When you join SWCS, you join a community of conservationists who care about the future of natural resources. Our members include Soil and Water Conservation District employees, researchers, administrators, extension workers, students, producers, policymakers, educators, consultants, retirees, state, federal, and local government employees and more.

SNEC's programs assist members in keeping abreast of regulatory changes, earning continuing education credits to maintain professional licenses, facilitating technology transfers, networking, and gaining insights into recent trends in research. Student members benefit from the ability to network among peers and interact with professionals in their fields of interest to identify potential future employers or mentors.

**Join SWCS: <https://www.swcs.org/get-involved/join/>.**

**Please help us welcome our newest members who joined through the Blue Light Special:**

- Claire Corcoran
- Matthew Gustafson
- Amber Hardy
- Emily Perko
- Josh Wilson

**Learn More about the Chapter by visiting us at <https://swcssnec.org/> or by following us on social media.**



@SWCS.SNEC.ORG



@swcssnec



Soil & Water Conservation Society (SWCS)  
Southern New England Chapter (SNEC)

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



**Meagan Eagle** is a Research Scientist at the Woods Hole Coastal & Marine Science Center of the U.S. Geological Survey. Her research focuses on coastal resilience and the role these ecosystems play in the climate system, particularly at the nexus of management actions and greenhouse gas emissions. She works with managers and policy makers at local, state and federal levels to provide actionable science.

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**Wenley Ferguson** is Save The Bay's Director of Restoration. Since 1990 she has worked on coastal habitat and water quality restoration projects throughout Narragansett Bay and its watershed including restoring salt marsh, anadromous fish, dune, and coastal buffer habitats and stormwater management. Wenley works with partners on design, implementation and monitoring of restoration and coastal resilience projects.



**William Giuliano** Cranberry Bog Restoration Program Manager, Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game Division of Ecological Restoration

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**Tom Groves** is a Senior botanist with the BSC Group. For the past 10 years he has worked across New England's landscapes providing advice and recommendations to federal and state agencies as well as private landowners for ecological habitat restoration and invasive plant management. More recently, Tom is performing rare, threatened and endangered plant surveys for utility companies and other agencies required to avoid impacts to



state or threatened species. Mr. Groves holds a B.S. in Wildlife Biology and a B.A. in English. Tom is also an active member of the New England Botanical Society and in 2022 was awarded a research grant for rare plant research in his home state of Vermont.

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**Melissa Hayden** is the State Biologist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Rhode Island, a position she has held since August of 2022. In this role, Melissa provides technical support for NRCS staff, partners, and clients on projects relating to terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitat, Endangered Species Act compliance, the National Environmental Policy Act, and forestry related topics. Melissa has worked with RI NRCS since 2010, where

she served as a District Conservationist for the eastern and southern districts prior to starting in the State Biologist role. Prior to 2010, Melissa worked for MA NRCS as a soil scientist and soil conservationist. Melissa has a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science and Management from the University of Rhode Island, where she served as a research assistant, and a Master of Science degree in Plant and Soil Science from the University of Vermont, where she served as a teaching assistant.

**Melissa Kaplan** is the License and Permitting Team Lead at the BSC Group. Using her 22 years of professional environmental and biological consulting experience, Ms. Kaplan manages and leads BSC project teams across New England in local, state, and federal permitting efforts for large-scale utility companies, municipal projects, state agencies and others. Ms. Kaplan holds a master's degree in marine biology and is a Professional Wetland Scientist. Melissa is also on the board of the Connecticut Power and Energy Society, serving as Membership Committee Lead.

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**Elizabeth Kirmmse, RLA, ASLA, WEDG**, is a Project Manager and Landscape Architect with Fuss & O'Neill. Beth graduated from Smith College with a degree in Government and a focus on environmental policy and completed her Masters in Landscape Architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design. She works with clients to develop solutions that mitigate vulnerabilities to climate change and provide ecological, economic and cultural co-benefits. With a passion

for designing natural infrastructure, Beth rethinks the built environment, creating innovative designs that improve the ecological health of a system resilient solutions for waterfront locations, and is currently designing resilient riverfronts, shorelines, and natural infrastructure throughout New England.

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**Alison Kocek** is a Fish and Wildlife Biologist at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southern New England Coastal Program, based out of the Rhode Island Field Office. She has been working with and studying tidal marsh birds for the past 14 years. She received her Ph.D. at State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) in 2022, where she studied how Saltmarsh and Seaside Sparrows are adapting their nesting behaviors to a changing environment. One of her main duties in the Coastal Program is to work with non-federal partners in Long Island, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts to provide monitoring support for tidal marsh restoration projects to benefit at-risk species such as the Saltmarsh Sparrow.

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**Joe Manetta** is obtained his master's degree in biological and environmental sciences at URI under the guidance of Dr. Mark Stolt in the Lab of Pedology and Soil Environmental Science in 2023. Joe's research primarily centered around the formation and carbon storage of tidal marsh soils. Additionally, he has contributed to the URI soil judging team, helping them reach the national level twice. His interests revolve around applying soil formation knowledge to

investigate the complex interactions between soil and the environment, aiming to better comprehend and address regional environmental challenges. Currently, Joe works as a research associate at URI studying soil moisture regimes.

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**Nicolette Nelson** is a project manager at the University of Connecticut where she coordinates monitoring and research of a restored salt marsh in Stratford, CT. She also leads data management efforts for a multi-site thin layer placement project, manages undergraduate technicians, and assists with graduate student projects and analysis. Nicolette received a BS in Wildlife from Cal Poly Humboldt in 2016. In 2020 she received an MS in Biology from Washington State University Vancouver, where her research was funded by an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship and focused on American bullfrog invasion in California. Nicolette has many years of field experience, mostly working on research and management of threatened and endangered wildlife species



**Christine Odiaga** is living her dream, “washed ashore” on Cape Cod and working an incredibly cool job. Prior experience that made it a perfect fit includes ten years of outreach and education as a MassDEP Wetlands Circuit Rider, three years as a municipal conservation agent and six years of construction site sampling and monitoring on the Central Artery/Tunnel project (fascinating!!). Christine took advantage of the cooperative education program at

Northeastern University and found that training and exposure to be as valuable as any class.

**Jonah Saitz** is a Biologist in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southern New England Coastal Program based in Charlestown, Rhode Island. He's primarily focused on supporting our office and partner's: GIS, Hydrologic, and RTK Surveying needs, across Connecticut and Long Island. Before joining the service in February 2023, he served as Hydrologic Survey Technician contractor based in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Northeast Regional Office in Hadley, MA. Where he was part of an RTK strike team supporting infrastructure/saltmarsh restoration projects at National Wildlife Refuges from Maine to Virginia. Jonah received his B.S in Environmental Science from Rochester Institute of Technology in 2019.

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**Rock Singewald** is the immediate past President of the Warren Land Trust and has been involved in the implementation of the restoration plan at Sowams Meadows Preserve over the last two years. He has been on the Board of Directors of the Trust for 6 years and in addition to the work at Sowams Meadows, he is the Steward of the Haile Farm Preserve just a little further up the Palmer River. He has worked with NRCS and Save the Bay on projects at both

of those preserves as well as at Jacob's Point on the Warren River. Rock is retired from a long career with the Federal Government and has been working for many years with his wife Anne Raver on habitats of native plants for native insects and birds, starting with the 120 acre farm he and his wife worked in Maryland prior to moving to Rhode Island and continuing with the creation of a wildlife habitat in their yard in Warren.

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# Thank you to our 2024 Exhibitors



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*SNEC SWCS Field Day - Westerly 2023*

## VENUE INFORMATION



**Crowne Plaza Hotel**  
**801 Greenwich Avenue**  
**Warwick, RI 02886**

**Plaza Balroom**

**See a map.**



Attendee check-in is required in the Plaza Foyer