



2021 SOUTHWEST FLORIDA CLIMATE SUMMIT

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

YOCA ARDITI-ROCHA, CLEO INSTITUTE

Yoca Arditi-Rocha is the Executive Director of The CLEO Institute where she works to drive climate action through community engagement and education. Yoca is an Al Gore trained climate change speaker and presenter, an active member of the International Society of Sustainability Professionals (ISSP), and a US Green Building Council certified LEED-Green Associate. Before joining CLEO, she was the founder and executive director of No Planeta B, a consultancy with an advocacy core, which specialized in carbon footprint inventories, climate action planning, sustainable events, climate literacy and corporate environmental capacity training in South Florida & Latin America. She has participated in past United Nations climate negotiation conference of parties and has served as the sustainability advisor for several schools, colleges, and organizations in the region. Yoca holds a degree on Corporate Sustainability from the Institute of Global Sustainability at the University of Vermont and a Master's degree in Liberal Arts from Harvard University in Sustainability.

MELISSA BALDWIN, FLORIDA CLINICIANS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Melissa Baldwin is the Director of Florida Clinicians for Climate Action, where she engages health professionals to learn about climate impacts and advocate for equitable solutions. Mrs. Baldwin has 15 years of experience advocating for local, state, and federal clean energy policies. Melissa has worked with non-profit climate and energy groups to enhance public awareness of climate threats such as sea-level rise, hurricanes, and public health. Melissa specializes in public relations, environmental education, and public policy. In 2006, Melissa was named one of the Top "30 Under 30" young professionals by the Tampa Bay Business Journal. Melissa's passion for climate and health dates back to college, where she served as the media intern for the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School.

ERIN DEADY, ERIN DEADY LAW

Erin L. Deady, P.A., is a full service legal and consulting firm. Firm President, Erin Deady, is a licensed attorney in Florida, a certified land planner by the American Institute of Certified Planners (“AICP”) and a LEED AP. Ms. Deady's practice is primarily focused on public sector government representation but also includes numerous private sector and agricultural clients. Ms. Deady's practice includes environmental restoration initiatives, water, energy, climate, local government, administrative law and land use issues. Ms. Deady's experience includes litigation, public finance, special purpose governmental representation and creation and land use planning. Erin is a frequent lecturer and author on climate change, energy, environmental restoration and public finance issues statewide and nationally.

ELIZABETH GORE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE FUND

As Senior Vice President for Political Affairs at EDF, Elizabeth brings decades of experience to lead a team of lobbyists and advocates aimed at ensuring cleaner air and water, safer communities, healthier kids and a livable planet. She also works to advance EDF's policy priorities through the political system, working with EDF's partners across the political spectrum and to take EDF policy goals and make them a reality. Prior to her time at EDF, Elizabeth served in senior positions in the U.S. House of Representatives, the Office of Management and Budget, and the U.S. Senate, where she focused on energy and environmental policies. She also worked in the private sector, representing a range of energy and environmental interests.

DR. WENDY D. GRAHAM, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Wendy D. Graham is the Carl S. Swisher Eminent Scholar in Water Resources in the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering and Director of the Water Institute at the University of Florida, Gainesville. Her current research includes the evaluation of impacts of climate variability and climate change on hydrologic systems. Dr. Graham is currently a member of the National Academic of Sciences Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) Water Science and Technology Board. She served as a member of the NASEM Committee on Independent Scientific Review of Everglades Restoration Progress from 2009-2012 and 2017-2018, a member of the NASEM Committee on Review of EPA's Economic Analysis of Final Water Quality Standards for Nutrients for Lakes and Flowing Waters in Florida from 2011-2012, the Hydrologic Sciences Program Director for the National Science Foundation in 2015-2016, and was appointed by the Florida Governor to the State of Florida Blue Green Algae Task Force in 2019. Dr. Graham has a B.S. in environmental engineering from the University of Florida, and a Ph.D. in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

WHITNEY GRAY, FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Whitney Gray has been the Administrator of the Florida Resilient Coastlines Program in DEP's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection since December of 2017. Her bachelor's and master's degrees are from the University of Florida where she studied zoology and systems ecology. She first worked on climate change vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning with the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council. From 2012 to 2015, Whitney served as Sea Level Rise Coordinator for both the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Florida Sea Grant, specializing in the effects of sea level rise on coastal ecosystems serving as a subject matter expert during the Imperiled Species Management Planning process. Whitney is a 5th generation Florida native from the Gulf Coast.

JENNIFER HECKER, COASTAL & HEARTLAND NATIONAL ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

Jennifer Hecker is the Executive Director of the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP), working to bring together diverse stakeholders and local, state and federal governments to restore and protect water and wildlife habitat in the CHNEP area in Central and Southwest Florida. She presently serves as a Science Advisory Committee member on South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, as well as is the Chair of the Environmental Advisory Committee for the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Prior to joining CHNEP, Jennifer was the Director of Natural Resource Policy for the Conservancy of Southwest Florida for approximately 13 years, an environmental scientist working for the government and private sectors, and served on numerous boards including the national Great Waters Coalition, Everglades Coalition, and the Florida Coastal and Oceans Coalition. Jennifer's undergraduate work was in Environmental Studies, and graduate in Tropical Biology and Conservation.

NICOLE IADEVAIA, COASTAL & HEARTLAND NATIONAL ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

Nicole Iadevaia currently serves as the Research & Outreach Manager of the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP). Nicole oversees the CHNEP's work in science communications, public outreach and engagement as well as research and restoration project management on projects that restore and protect water resources and habitat in Central and Southwest Florida. Prior to joining the CHNEP, Nicole worked for Sarasota County government. She has a background in research science, environmental communication and policy, water quality and fisheries monitoring, as well as stormwater management.

DR. JOANNE MULLER, FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY

Joanne Muller is an Associate Professor and the Department Chair of Marine and Earth Sciences at Florida Gulf Coast University. She completed her Bachelor's degree in Earth Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia and received her Ph.D. in Paleoclimatology from the James Cook University, Australia. Prior to being recruited to FGCU in 2011, Dr. Muller was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Dr. Muller's research has a strong focus on climate change and its potential impacts in the Southwest Florida region. More specifically her research focuses on hurricanes and their impacts on the coastal environment.

DR. ANA PUSKIN-CHEVLIN, GROWING CLIMATE SOLUTIONS (CONSERVANCY OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA)

Dr. Puszkín-Chevlin is Regional Director of Growing Climate Solutions: Path to Positive SWFL, a joint initiative of Community Foundation of Collier County, Southwest Florida Community Foundation, Florida Gulf Coast University, and the Conservancy of Southwest Florida. Previously, she had served as the Sustainability Officer for the City of Delray Beach, where she was involved in policy and program development on issues of urban sustainability, environmental conservation, and coastal and climate resilience. An urban planner with over 35 years of experience, Dr. Puszkín-Chevlin worked as a Senior Research Fellow and Visiting Scholar at Florida Atlantic and Lynn University. She has presented and published on climate and environmental impact topics in several academic journals, co-authored a chapter on resiliency for the Real Estate Appraisal Institute, and contributed to the Urban Land Institute's publication on Principals for Coastal Development. Originally from New York, she received her Masters and Ph.D. in Urban Planning from Columbia University, and a BA from Oberlin College.

DR. MICHAEL SAVARESE, FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY

Michael Savarese is a Professor of Coastal Resilience & Climate Adaptation within the Department of Marine and Earth Sciences within Florida Gulf Coast University's Water School. He has degrees in geoscience with background in coastal geology. He has been a faculty member at FGCU since the University's opening in the fall of 1997. Mike's teaching and research interests concern the history of environmental change in coastal settings, particularly in response to human development, climate change, and sea-level rise. Throughout his years at FGCU, he has served as a liaison between scientists and managers/decision-makers, serving in the past as the Chairperson of the Big Cypress and the Southwest Florida Restoration Coordination Teams. More recently, he has served as a community liaison to foster coastal resilience and climate-change preparedness efforts throughout Southwest Florida and beyond, working closely with natural, urban, and cultural resource managers and elected officials within local, state, and federal government.

DAWN SHIRREFFS, ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE FUND

In her role as Environmental Defense Fund's (EDF) Florida Director, Dawn works to integrate, enhance and scale the impact of EDF's existing assets in Florida to better address climate change. Dawn mobilizes Florida influencers and constituencies to reach and build relationships with members of Congress and key in-state constituencies to develop long-lasting solutions to climate change. Prior to joining EDF, Dawn held advocacy roles at Clean Water Action, National Parks Conservation Association and at The Everglades Foundation working on restoration of America's Everglades. Most recently she led the development of a Public Affairs team at The Miami Foundation with a focus on regional resilience and building the bench of local nonprofits to participate in public policy solutions. Dawn holds B.A. in Growth Management and Environmental Studies from Rollins College, a M.P.A. from Florida International University and a Nonprofit Management Executive Certificate from Georgetown University.

NOAH VALENSTEIN, FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Secretary Noah Valenstein heads the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and currently serves as the state’s chief resilience officer. Noah has served as secretary since 2017, and he is the first DEP secretary to be appointed by two consecutive governors. Cultivating more than 15 years of public service experience, Noah has worked closely with both the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate. During Noah’s time serving the state’s legislative and executive branches, he aided former Speaker of the House Marco Rubio and former Governor Rick Scott, both of whom are now sitting U.S. senators. In his previous post as executive director of the Suwannee River Water Management District, the Alachua County native oversaw the protection and conservation of water and land resources across 15 counties. Through the reinvigoration of the Suwannee River Partnership, Noah boldly brought together environmental advocates and agricultural industry leaders to help solve water quality and water supply challenges. During his tenure as secretary of DEP, he has continued to champion and advocate for water quality improvements, Everglades and springs restoration, coastal resiliency and conservation of Florida’s prized properties. Noah attended the Florida State University College of Law, previously graduating with honors from the University of Florida’s School of Natural Resources and Environment.

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