

2026 Pennsylvania Aquatic Resource Restoration Conference

MARCH 3 - 4

PENN STATER HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER

FEATURE SPOTLIGHT

Get to know the speakers who will be presenting at the 2026 Aquatic Resource Restoration Conference!

INTRODUCING OUR TWO KEYNOTE SPEAKERS DOROTHY J. MERRITTS AND ELLEN WOHL

Dorothy J. Merritts

Franklin & Marshall College

Dorothy Merritts (B.Sc. Indiana University of Pennsylvania, M.Sc. Stanford University, Ph.D. University of Arizona) is a geologist with expertise in streams, rivers, and other landforms and on the impact of geologic processes, climate change, and human activities on the form and history of Earth's surface. Her primary research in the eastern United States focuses on the Appalachian mid-Atlantic region, where she is investigating the role of human activities in transforming the upland woodlands and valley-bottom wetland meadows of Eastern North America into a predominantly agricultural and mixed-industrial/urban landscape since European settlement. This work is associated with the development of new wetland, floodplain, and stream restoration methods that rely on geomorphic investigation. She uses lidar and other remote-sensing data to map geomorphic evidence of continuous permafrost during the last glacial maximum across Pennsylvania and Maryland. In the western United States, she researched the northern San Andreas Fault of coastal California for two decades; her international work focused on fault movements in South Korea, Indonesia, Australia, and Costa Rica. She is a professor in the Department of Earth and Environment at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. From 2004 to 2005, she was the Flora Stone Mather Visiting Distinguished Professor at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. From 2011 to 2012, she was the Alan Cox Visiting Professor at Stanford University. She is the author of an introductory textbook in environmental geology, numerous scientific papers and edited book chapters, and a contributing author to five National Research Council reports. She was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2022.





Ellen Wohl

Department of Geosciences, Colorado State University

Ellen Wohl received a BS in geology from Arizona State University and a PhD in geosciences from the University of Arizona. She is a professor in the Department of Geosciences at Colorado State University and a University Distinguished Professor. Her research focuses on physical processes and forms in river channels and floodplains, and how these interact with biogeochemistry and ecological and human communities. She has conducted field research in diverse environments around the world.

INTRODUCING OUR SPEAKERS

Drew Altland

Straughan Environmental, Inc.

Drew Altland is a water resources engineer with over 30 years of experience providing assessment, design, monitoring, expert panel support, legal support, and construction supervision for a wide variety of projects. His extensive expertise in fluvial geomorphology, sediment transport, and eco-system restoration coupled with advanced hydrodynamic modeling has allowed him to lead many successful watershed, stream, floodplain, wetland, and shoreline restoration projects. He has been instrumental in the development of computational methods and protocols to achieve MS4/TMDL, stormwater, and mitigation credits for restoring streams, floodplains, and wetlands.





Julia Carr

Franklin & Marshall College

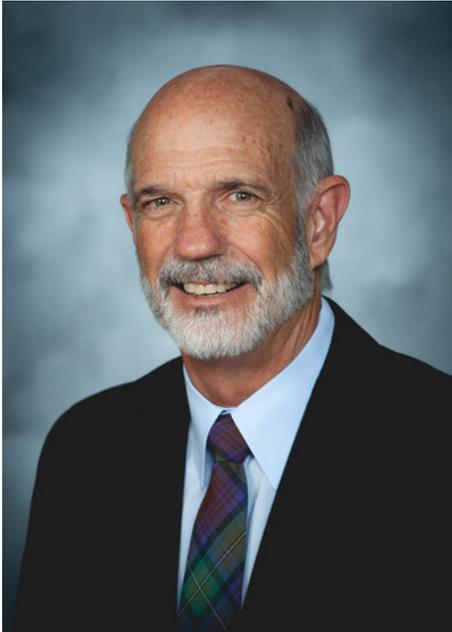
Julia Carr is a fluvial geomorphologist working as a postdoctoral researcher at Franklin and Marshall College. She received a BS in geology from Brown University and a PhD in geosciences from Penn State University. Her research combines field and remote sensing techniques to investigate how rivers and hillslopes evolve through the interactions of fluid flow, sediment transport, and landscape form. She is currently working on monitoring sediment transport, fluid flow, and water temperature in restoration sites in eastern PA.

Shuyu Chang

Franklin & Marshall College

Shuyu Chang (B.Sc., China Agricultural University; M.S.E., Johns Hopkins University; Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University) is a postdoctoral researcher at Franklin & Marshall, where she uses thermal and hydrological signatures to evaluate the effectiveness of legacy sediment removal restoration in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Her broader research focuses on developing datasets and modeling approaches to better simulate and understand water quality across local, regional, and continental scales. She will join the University of Connecticut as an Assistant Professor in Fall 2026.





John Cox

Little Conestoga Creek Foundation

John retired as President and CEO of Turkey Hill Dairy in 2019 after almost 35 years with the company and its parent, Kroger Co. Since retirement he has focused on assisting Lancaster County organizations with cleaning up local streams and ultimately the Conestoga River. He primarily assists local nonprofits with strategic planning for sustainable funding, capacity building, funding/regulatory policy improvements, and re-engaging the community with its water assets. He has served the Little Conestoga Blue Green Connector project in an advisory role since inception in 2019, focused on community outreach, strategy, advocacy, project management and funding.

John is a graduate of Millersville University, B.S. - Business Administration, and Penn State University, with a Master of Management, MBA. He was active in his industry as a board member of International Ice Cream Association for 25 years and served the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on the Governor's Food Safety Council from 2008 - 2011. His service to his local community currently includes Lancaster Clean Water Partners (founder, Senior Advisor) and Conestoga River Club. His past nonprofit service included Lancaster County Economic Development Company (past Chair), Lancaster Farmland Trust (past Chair), and Lancaster Workforce Investment Board. He has over 70 years of nonprofit board service. John and his wife Catherine reside in Landisville, PA. His hobbies include backpacking, bird watching, running and photography.

Andrew Donaldson

Johnson, Mirmiran, & Thompson, Inc.

Andrew Donaldson is a Senior Environmental Scientist at JMT and has over 28 years of experience in stream, floodplain, and wetland restoration and ecological design projects throughout the eastern and southeastern United States. Andrew's expertise is in the design of stream, floodplain, and wetland restoration projects using the principles of fluvial geomorphology to reestablish appropriate riverine, palustrine and valley bottom ecological functions and services. Andrew has a B.S. in Environmental Sciences from Drexel University and a Master's in Environmental Engineering from The Pennsylvania State University. He has designed

numerous successful ecological restoration projects throughout his professional career and also has extensive experience in construction inspection and construction oversight for the implementation of stream, floodplain, and wetland restoration and mitigation projects.





Benjamin Ehrhart

LandStudies

Ben Ehrhart is a Professional Engineer and Certified Floodplain Manager and oversees the Design Division at LandStudies. He has over 27 years of experience in watershed hydrology and hydraulics and watershed planning. His agricultural, environmental, and land planning background provides a unique combination of experience and expertise in addressing issues relating to stormwater management and restoration of natural systems. He has extensive experience in stormwater management planning for residential, commercial and industrial land development projects meeting local ordinance requirements and utilizing innovative Best Management Practices. In addition, he has significant training and experience in applied fluvial geomorphology, river assessment and monitoring, and the comprehensive restoration of stream, wetland and floodplain systems. He has been the lead designer for numerous successful stream and floodplain restoration projects that have realized stormwater peak and volume reduction, pollutant load reduction, flood hazard mitigation, habitat restoration, recreational opportunities, and a host of other benefits. Ben is a graduate of Penn State University with a BS in Environmental Resource Management and an MS in Agricultural and Biological Engineering.

Su Fanok

PADE The Nature Conservancy

Su Fanok, from The Nature Conservancy, specializes in geomorphology, freshwater strategy development, and cross-sector partnerships. She leads system-level approaches that protect ecosystem function and advance high-ROI restoration practices, translating science into practical solutions that address biodiversity loss and climate impacts.





Dr. Joe Galella

Franklin & Marshall College

Dr. Joe Galella's research focuses on freshwater biogeochemistry and stream restoration. His research interests include freshwater salinization, BMP efficacy, stream restoration effectiveness over time and floodplain health. His current research involves monitoring legacy sediment removal type stream restorations and comparing their biogeochemical characteristics to other stream restoration designs. This is being accomplished through a combination of grab sampling with laboratory analysis and in field continuous monitoring sensors.

Matthew Gilbert

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Pittsburgh District

Matthew Gilbert began with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2014. After serving in various functions, he now manages the District's mitigation program under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. These responsibilities cover the Ohio River basin in eastern Ohio, western Pennsylvania, and northern West Virginia. Matthew came to the Corps by way of the National Park Service.





Dave Goerman

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection - Bureau of Waterways, Engineering, and Wetlands

David Goerman is a Water Program Specialist at the PA Department of Environmental Protection in the Division of Wetlands, Encroachment and Training, Bureau of Waterways Engineering and Wetlands. Dave's responsible for providing permitting and technical expertise on a wide range of issues involving waterways, wetlands, floodplains, and stormwater management. His most recent work has focused on aquatic resource headwater research, large-scale watershed restoration, and compensatory mitigation banking. He has worked on banking projects involving over 60 miles of stream restoration and 370 acres of wetland restoration work. David has worked in the Division since 1993 and has a B.S. Degree in the Biological Sciences from Clarion University, Clarion, PA.

Alyssa Hannigan

LandStudies

Alyssa Hannigan is an Environmental Designer for LandStudies, specializing in ecological design, landscape architecture, and comprehensive planning. Alyssa's process begins with studying a site's historical, ecological, and cultural systems to develop research-driven design solutions. She contributes technical and creative expertise to a wide range of projects, from site-scale ecological restoration projects to watershed-scale collaborative initiatives. She is committed to connecting people and place, empowering communities to foster reciprocal relationships with the land around them, and supporting reintegration efforts. Alyssa believes that restoring ecosystems must go hand-in-hand with restoring the cultural connections that sustain them.

Alyssa is a board member for the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) Mid-Atlantic Chapter, and received a B.S. Biology from Messiah University (2015) and M.L.Arch from Temple University (2022).





Jeff Hartranft

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection - Bureau of Waterways, Engineering, and Wetlands

Jeffrey L Hartranft is Chief of the Environmental and Geological Services Section in PADEP's Bureau of Waterways Engineering and Wetlands, Division of Wetlands, Encroachments, and Training. His educational background is in biology and botany. He began his career working in federal and state water related regulatory programs during the mid 1990's. He Co-Chaired PADEP's Legacy Sediment Workgroup and been involved in dam removal project reviews and monitoring for 25 years.

Ben Hayes

Bucknell University

Ben is a professor in the Center for Sustainability and the Environment and director of the Watershed Sciences and Engineering Program at Bucknell University. His research interests are in fluvial geomorphology and river behavior, and he teaches classes in fluvial processes and aquatic habitat restoration. He is a member of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee for the Chesapeake Research Consortium and serves on the advisory board of the Pennsylvania Water Resources Research Center.

Ben has BS, MS and PhD degrees in hydrogeology and fluvial geomorphology and MDiv degree in thought and ethics.





Dr. Kelly S. Johnson

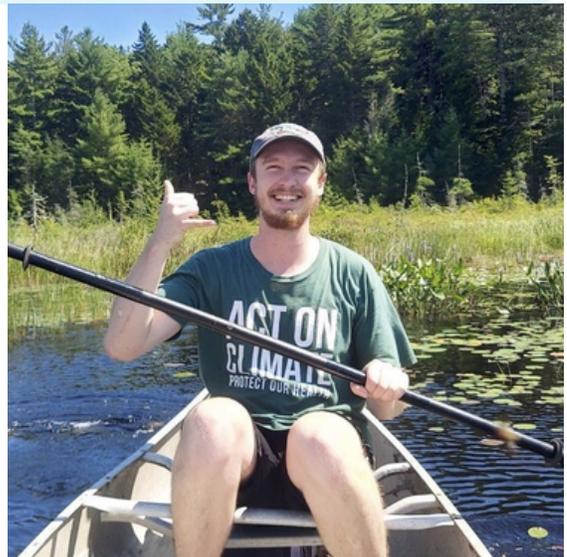
Ohio University

Dr. Kelly Johnson is a faculty member at Ohio University in the department of Biological Sciences and currently holds the AEP Watershed Professorship in the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. Insects are my passion, but I teach courses in aquatic biology, entomology and animal physiology and train students interested in careers in freshwater and marine science, ecological restoration, and conservation. Our lab conducts ecotoxicological assessments of a variety of contaminants, including acidity and metals from acid mine drainage, insecticides and microplastics on model organisms such as mayflies, ragonflies, aquatic midges, and crayfish. We often combine laboratory and mesocosm studies with long term monitoring in the field to better understand post-restoration patterns of biological recovery of streams and wetlands. Much of this work is in collaboration with local watershed groups, the Ohio University Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs, and state and federal agency partners. Past and current projects include the development of rapid macroinvertebrate assessment protocols for annual monitoring of acid mine impaired sites in eastern Ohio, comparisons of structural and functional metrics related to organic matter processing, and developing predictive models of ecological recovery.

Jake Lamb

Franklin & Marshall College

Jake Lamb is a Postbaccalaureate Environmental Economics Research Associate and Geospatial Analyst with the Chesapeake Watershed Initiative at Franklin & Marshall College. Under the tutelage of Patrick M. Fleming, PhD, Jake is investigating the cost effectiveness of legacy sediment restoration for the mitigation of key pollutants in the Chesapeake Watershed, in comparison with other best management practices commonly utilized in the watershed. His other ongoing research projects include economic valuation of the carbon sequestration benefits of legacy sediment restoration projects utilizing the social cost of carbon, and the accounting of other co-benefits associated with legacy sediment restoration. Jake is a part 107 certified commercial drone pilot for the research group, utilizing the group's DJI drone fleet to collect RGB and thermal restoration progress photography, aesthetic videography, and photogrammetry to create digital elevation models (DEMs) and thermal maps of restoration sites. Jake also conducts various other field & communications activities for the CWI as they arise, including periodic grant writing. In his free time, Jake likes to sing, write, and produce music.





Sam Leberg

Ecosystem Planning & Restoration

Sam Leberg is an Environmental Scientist with Ecosystem Planning & Restoration, where he supports field work and permitting for stream and floodplain restoration projects. Formally, he was an ORISE fellow with the EPA in the Freshwater and Marine Regulatory Branch, where his primary research focused on the performance, monitoring, management, and crediting of dynamic stream restorations as compensatory mitigation.

Laurel Etter Longenecker

RiverStewards Collaborative

Laurel brings over a decade of experience in the environmental field and currently serves as the Executive Director of RiverStewards Collaborative. Throughout her career she has held various roles spanning the public, private, and non-profit sectors. She holds a bachelor's degree in Anthropology from Marshall University (2012) and a Master of Science in Resilient and Sustainable Communities from Green Mountain College (2017), both with concentrations in environmental studies.

Laurel's diverse experience offers a multidisciplinary perspective on the connection between humans and ecosystem health. She enjoys learning about local Indigenous lifeways, both past and present, and strives to help contribute to the preservation of these cultures. Her international experience living and working with Indigenous communities in Australia, Guatemala, and Nepal has deepened her understanding of how social and historical contexts shape environmental challenges.

A strong advocate for place-based and community-driven approaches, Laurel is passionate about fostering inclusive and holistic approaches to problem-solving and leading initiatives that integrate environmental stewardship with social justice. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time outdoors with family and friends, playing soccer, gardening, cooking and reading.





Christy Mower, CERP

Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc.

Christy Mower has over 25 years of experience, currently serving as a Principal and Ecological Restoration Lead within CEC's Pittsburgh Ecological Services practice. Christy specializes in aquatic resource restoration and compensatory mitigation, having designed miles of stream restoration and acres of wetland restoration during her career. Beginning her career with the US Army Corps of Engineers in Norfolk, Virginia (VA) and serving as a fisheries biologist with the VA Game and Inland Fisheries Department, she has in-depth regulatory experience to help navigate clients through difficult local, state, and federal permitting projects. While working for one of the largest energy industries in the state of WV and

PA, her working knowledge and understanding of major decision-making strategies provides valuable insight to improve short and long-term cost savings, understanding industry priorities, goals, and objectives. As a Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner (CERP), Christy has completed Levels I through IV Rosgen Training and has taken weeks of additional stream and wetland design training, led by experts in the fields of low-tech process-based restoration, floodplain restoration, and natural channel design techniques. Publishing several papers and articles across her career and presenting at specialized conferences across the country, Christy is a recognized expert within the industry. Christy is currently working on projects in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and North Carolina, within the Appalachian Mountain Region and across the country in Colorado. Christy's role is to lead designs in CEC's Pittsburgh office, while supporting other ecosystem restoration projects across CEC's nationwide footprint; and continue to expand CEC's ecological services footprint across the county.

Nicholas Myers

LandStudies

Nick Myers is the Maintenance Manager at LandStudies and has worked with the company for about 15 years collectively, working up from installation laborer to overseeing all of LS's natural area maintenance. He has Masters' degrees in Environmental Science and Sustainable Development from Indiana University - Bloomington, and has been involved in natural resource management in some iteration for 20 years. Though he is currently living in Lancaster, PA with wife and daughter (and cats) and grew up there, he's managed to squeeze in some time living in six other states and Australia. His kiddo is currently building a time machine in their basement, and he'll let you know yesterday if it worked.



Ward Oberholtzer, P.E.

LandStudies

Ward Oberholtzer is a Professional Engineer working for LandStudies, a Davey Company. His 38 years of expertise includes applied stream morphology, hydrology/hydraulics, bridge scour, fluvial geomorphology, river mechanics and sediment transport investigations. He provides competent supervision and technical engineering support for all aspects of stream and floodplain restoration, watershed assessments, and wetland creation and enhancements. Additionally, he has been a consultant to Maryland State Highway Administration's (MDSHA) Office of Bridge

Development and the Structural Hydrologic and Hydraulics Unit. Mr. Oberholtzer is a graduate of the University of Maryland with a degree in Agricultural Engineering and a concentration in Soil and Water Engineering.

Art Parola

Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc.

Art Parola is a water resources engineer with more than 35 years of experience in floodplain hydraulics, geomorphology, and stream and wetland restoration. His background includes service as a professor at the University of Louisville, leadership of two restoration-focused companies, and his current role as a Principal Engineer at Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc. His technical work emphasizes flood resilience of highway structures, geomorphic assessment and channel stability, sediment transport analysis, and 2D hydrodynamic modeling applied to restoration design. The Louisville-based team he led has completed designs for more than 300,000 feet of stream restoration and hundreds of acres of wetlands across Kentucky, West Virginia, Nevada, and Pennsylvania.



Justin Spangler

LandStudies

Justin is a Professional Engineer and Project Manager specializing in the design and implementation of Floodplain Restoration projects. His design philosophy employs the application of historical and geomorphic evidence to identify impairments which is used to return aquatic resources to their maximum ecological potential. He manages cutting edge restoration projects that challenge the traditional expectations of ecological restoration, producing multiple restoration

projects with documented use by Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species of plants and animals.

Mr. Spangler also develops and presents interdisciplinary training, interactive virtual engagement, novel infographics and hands-on educational opportunities ranging from citizen scientists to subject matter experts. These materials combine concepts in historical land use changes, geomorphology, biology, chemistry and hydrology into relatable touchstones that can bridge academic concepts into everyday interactions with the environment.

Joe Sweeney

Little Conestoga Foundation

Joseph V. Sweeney is the Executive Director and co-founder of the Water Science Institute (WSI). He has over 45 years of experience in both the public and private sectors and is a past Chair of both the Lancaster City Water Authority and the Lancaster Farmland Trust Board of Trustees. Through the Conservation Innovation Grant program, Growing Greener Program and with public and private sector partners, the Institute has worked extensively to promote mapping technologies, economic analysis and scientific research on water quality issues. These issues include historic dams, dam removal, stream, and floodplain restoration as well as Legacy Sediment-based removal and repurposing strategies. Currently, Mr. Sweeney is a founding Trustee of the Lancaster Clean Water Partners which serves as the county-wide coalition to achieve clean, clear water in Lancaster County.



Robert Walter

Franklin & Marshall College

Robert Walter (B.A., Franklin and Marshall College; Ph.D., Case Western Reserve University; Post-Doctoral Fellow, University of Toronto) is the Dr. Earl D. Stage & Mary E. Stage Professor of Geosciences at Franklin and Marshall College

<https://www.fandm.edu/robert-walter>. He conducts primary research in geochemistry, geochronology, and hydrogeology. His past research in East Africa helped calibrate the mode and tempo of early human evolution. His current research is focused on bedrock fractures and their control on groundwater flow, soil-sediment-bedrock-water interactions, human disturbances of environmental systems, and water quality. He directs the Big Spring Run

Restoration Experiment (<http://www.bsr-project.org/>), he is the Co-Director of the Chesapeake Watershed Initiative at Franklin and Marshall College (<https://www.fandm.edu/news/latest-news/2021/11/19/f-m-launches-chesapeake-watershed-initiative>), and is Director of the Geoscience Founders Society at F&M. He is a Fellow of the Geological Society of America (GSA), and a Fellow of the California Academy of Science, and is the recipient of the Kirk Bryan Award (GSA) for outstanding research in the field of Quaternary Geology and Geomorphology.

Chris Williams, Ph.D.

Franklin & Marshall College, - Professor of Environmental Science

Christopher Williams is a professor of Environmental Science in the Department of Earth and Environment at Franklin and Marshall College and co-Principal Investigator of the Chesapeake Watershed Initiative (CWI). With a career spanning several decades, his primary research has focused on the paleoecology and biogeochemistry of wetland ecosystems through time. Chris has studied different aspects of the paleoecology and paleoclimatology of ancient wetland ecosystems in Alaska, the Canadian Arctic, and western Siberia, among other locations. He has also conducted research on the link between wetland vegetation type, drought, and carbon cycling in modern peat forming wetlands. Chris earned his B.S. and M.S. in Natural Resources from Cornell University and his Ph.D. in Geology from the University of Pennsylvania.



Katie Wolf

Resource Environmental Solutions, LLC

Katie is a Regulatory Director for RES, coordinating with state and federal agencies to prepare and obtain the necessary permits and approvals for restoration projects across the region. Before joining RES, she spent five years working in Pittsburgh as a senior technical and permitting lead consultant for several energy clients. Previously, she worked as an environmental scientist in the Pacific Northwest region, conducting wetland delineations, sediment sampling, water quality and mitigation monitoring, and salmonid habitat restoration. Katie completed an ORISE Fellowship at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Headquarters in Washington, DC, where she worked for two years in the Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds under the total maximum daily load program. Prior to her ORISE Fellowship,

Katie lived abroad in Kamphuan, Thailand, where she conducted a watershed assessment study in association with USAID and the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok.

Shawyn Yeamans

Resource Environmental Solutions, LLC

Aquatic resource restoration / environmental professional with 13 years of professional experience in managing and developing stream/wetland mitigation banks and projects with varying degrees of complexity and scale from land due diligence to implementation and beyond.



Ephraim Zimmerman

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Ephraim Zimmerman is the Senior Director of Conservation Science for the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP) at Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, where he has worked since 2003. With PNHP, Ephraim supervises a team responsible for planning and conducting ecological inventories, monitoring, management, and restoration. Ephraim received a Bachelors of Science in Wildlife Biology from Colorado State University and a Masters of Science in Forest Ecology from the University of Michigan School of Natural Resource and Environment.