



## INITIATIVE NEWS

SASMI's work groups are getting up and rolling, with group leads planning and convening their first meetings. These groups will focus on specific topics of interest including Policy, Communications, Metrics and Science, Funding, and Culture and Community. They include volunteers from both the SASMI Partnership Council and Coalition, offering more SASMI partners an opportunity to help us Marsh Forward! Our September Coffee with SASMI will focus on these groups and their work.



*Hector Bottai via Wikimedia Commons*

---

## SASMI PARTNERS' GOOD WORK

**EPA awards \$421 million to multistate-nonprofit coalition.** The Environmental Protection Agency announced a \$421 million grant for a coalition that includes SASMI partner North Carolina Coastal Federation, as well as The Nature Conservancy and organizations in South Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland. The grant will support conservation and restoration projects

for peatland wetlands, coastal habitats, and forests that reduce carbon emissions and make communities more resilient to natural hazards. The projects proposed include salt marsh restoration, farmland preservation, conservation of land for outdoor recreation, construction of living shorelines. Congratulations to the award recipients!

**[Weathering Tides: Saving the Black Rail in South Carolina](#)**. The Eastern Black Rail is a small, incredibly secretive, and federally threatened marsh bird. In wetlands across much of the Atlantic seaboard, the Black Rail's distinctive "ki-ki-doo" call can no longer be heard. But in South Carolina's ACE Basin, biologists, land managers, and private landowners are collaborating to give this tiny rail a foothold for survival—and hopefully, a springboard for a wider recovery. Learn more about this important salt marsh species in this new video by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

**[Rising seas could cross thresholds for initiating coastal wetland drowning within decades across much of the United States](#)**. Accelerated sea-level rise is an existential threat to coastal wetlands, but the timing and extent of wetland drowning are debated. Recent data syntheses have clarified future relative sea-level rise exposure and sensitivity thresholds for drowning. Here, researchers integrate these advances to estimate when and where rising sea levels could cross thresholds for initiating wetland drowning across the conterminous United States. View the full publication at the link above.

**[Losing Ground: Mother Nature is no match for the Atlantic's rising waters](#)**. This article summarizes the reality of the challenges our marshes face in the southeast, with coasts succumbing to sea level rise faster than previously thought. Case studies at Cape Romain and Waccamaw NWRs show the differences that vegetation and sediment accretion can make and underpin the importance of SASMI's mission to conserve coastline-stabilizing marsh.

**[Living shoreline project is first to use Virginia's ag cost share funds](#)**. The James River Association and other project partners celebrated completing a living shoreline project at the privately owned Berkeley Plantation in Charles City, VA, on June 27. It's the first project of its kind to use funds from a Virginia agriculture cost share program. The project established 1,500 feet of shoreline along farmland, preventing over 105 tons of sediment from eroding into the river annually, all at no cost to landowner--a potential model to use in our SASMI states!

## Evaluation of Publicly Accessible Nature-Based Solutions Databases as Sources for Evidence

of Effectiveness. Nature-based solutions (NBS) present opportunities to tackle both the climate and biodiversity crises simultaneously by supporting carbon sequestration by ecosystems, enhancing community resilience to climate hazards, and providing high-quality habitats for diverse species. However, uncertainty around the performance and reliability of NBS continues to be raised by engineers, local decision-makers, grant-makers, and the insurance industry as an obstacle for widespread implementation of NBS at scale. This report by SASMI partners Katie Warnell and Lydia Olander evaluates the NBS data currently available through publicly available databases relative to the information needs described above.

## **FUNDING REMINDERS**

### REPI Challenge

The REPI Program designed the REPI Challenge to help meet its ambitious conservation goals while aiming to cultivate new projects, harness creativity, and protect critical testing and training capabilities. For the FY 2025 REPI Challenge, the REPI Program will distribute up to \$30 million in funding to advance efforts that preserve key mission capabilities of strategic importance to DOD and enhance installation and range resilience to climate change and severe weather events. Those who were invited for a full proposal will need to make their submissions by **August 12, 2024**.

### National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grants

FHWA has announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity with an availability of up to \$784 million of FY 2023 through 2026 funding for the National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) program). This program funds projects that would improve anadromous fish passage by mitigating AOP barriers posed by transportation-related facilities such as culverts. The deadline to apply is **September 23, 2024**.

### Inflation Reduction Act Community Change Grants Program

EPA's new Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants program (Community Change Grants) has announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for approximately \$2

billion dollars in Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds in environmental and climate justice activities to benefit disadvantaged communities through projects that reduce pollution, increase community climate resilience, and build community capacity to address environmental and climate justice challenges. These place-based investments will be focused on community-driven initiatives to be responsive to community and stakeholder input. They are designed to deliver on the transformative potential of the IRA for communities most adversely and disproportionately impacted by climate change, legacy pollution, and historical disinvestments. To learn more or check eligibility, visit the link above; due **November 21, 2024**.

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

### [SASMI Summit in Georgia | Multiple Dates August – October | Multiple Locations](#)

The Georgia Conservancy cordially invites you to attend the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI) Summit! This interactive workshop, to be held at six different locations throughout coastal Georgia, will focus on the long-term resiliency and protection of our coastal salt marsh. The workshops will feature speakers, mapping resources, videos, light refreshments, and interactive stations designed to foster a community conversation regarding threats to our coastal marshlands and opportunities for restoration and conservation of marshland now and in the future. Dates and locations are as follows (each workshop will follow the same format, so please attend whichever workshop is most convenient). More details at the link above.

Tuesday, August 13th from 4 - 6:30, Savannah, GA

Thursday, August 15 from 4 PM – 6:30 PM, Richmond Hill, GA

Tuesday, September 10 from 4 PM – 6:30 PM, Brunswick, GA

Thursday, September 12 from 4 PM – 6:30 PM, Kingsland, GA

Tuesday, October 22 from 4 PM – 6:30 PM in Liberty County, TBD

Thursday, October 24 from 3 PM – 6 PM, Darien, GA 31305

### [SECAS Third Thursday Web Forum | August 15, 2024 | Virtual](#)

This month's topic is: From uncertainty to action: A structured approach to filling knowledge gaps in rare species conservation. For many rare and declining species, the ability to conduct impactful conservation action is limited by a lack of crucial information such as basic taxonomy, individual and population needs, and severity of threats. Some knowledge gaps have the

potential to be significant barriers to successful conservation and must be addressed with research (and resources to support that research). Texas Parks and Wildlife created a system for identifying the most crucial knowledge gaps. Learn more about this system and how it can help direct rare species conservation efforts in this webinar.

#### **[International Conference on Shellfish Restoration | September 15-18, 2024 | Jekyll Island GA](#)**

The International Conference on Shellfish Restoration 2024 (ICSR2024) is now accepting abstract submissions for presentations and posters. The conference will be held from September 15-18, 2024, on Jekyll Island, Georgia, USA, and will bring together experts from around the world to discuss the latest developments in shellfish restoration and conservation. For more information, visit the link above.

#### **[Restore America's Estuaries Summit | October 6-10, 2024 | Arlington VA](#)**

Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) proudly presents the 2024 Coastal & Estuarine Summit. In its 12th year, the 2024 Summit will bring together the coastal restoration and management communities to explore issues, solutions, and lessons learned in their work. The Summit Program will address all aspects of coastal and estuarine restoration and management, including the Great Lakes and international locales.

#### **[SEAFWA 78th Annual Conference | October 12-16, 2024 | Augusta GA](#)**

The Annual Conference of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is a forum for the exchange of ideas and critical information regarding the management and protection of fish and wildlife resources primarily in the Southeast. The conference attracts over 500 representatives from state and federal agencies, citizens' organizations, universities, private wildlife research groups, fisheries and wildlife scientists, agency enforcement personnel, and other natural resource-related organizations.

**MARSH Forward!**

This newsletter is distributed by the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative Please share salt marsh related news, learning opportunities, publications, and management tools by emailing [amanda.gobeli@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:amanda.gobeli@ag.tamu.edu) | [Unsubscribe](#) from this list.