

Maryland Coastal Fellowship Project 1:

Community Engagement and Coastal Resilience Fellow

Primary Mentor

Ryland Taylor, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) - Coastal Management Program

Other mentor/team collaborators

Christine Burns, DNR

Samantha Lott, DNR

Leah Sheppard, DNR - Coastal Management Program

Carrie Decker, DNR

Overview/Background and Project Description

This fellowship will work as a bridge between state-level programs and community actions focused on enhancing local government capacity for coastal management and heat mitigation.

The fellow will function as a communicator and strategist to address coastal hazards and advance adaptation goals. This fellow will research vulnerability hotspots (flooding and extreme heat) and conduct targeted community engagement offering tools and resources. The fellow will also provide recommendations on how the Department of Natural Resource's (DNR) Coastal Management Program (CMP) can enhance its program of work to address heat, based on learnings from public engagement experiences.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of this fellowship is to facilitate two-way communication between state-level initiatives and local governments to:

- i. Support CMP outreach and relationship building - Learn about local and state initiatives and gather insights on capacity and resource needs to enhance DNR's resilience service delivery.
- ii. Promote and educate communities about [MyCoast](#) - MyCoast enables residents to capture and submit photos of localized flooding, storm damage, and tidal events to inform state and local flood mitigation efforts.

- iii. Assess the needs for heat mitigation in Maryland's coastal zone - Review state-level heat mitigation efforts and recommend approaches that can be facilitated by DNR's CMP with local partnerships.

Milestones and Outcomes

1. Support community engagement and enhance DNR and CMP resilience service delivery:
This will be the primary focus of this fellowship. The fellow will work with one of the CMP's teams, the Community Partnerships for Restoration program, and support the planning of listening sessions with local jurisdictions to understand their resilience needs and advance strategic programmatic support. The fellow will also help plan tours and field site visits to showcase resilience and restoration projects to local, state, and federal partners and support the exchange of best practices.
2. Platform Management and Outreach for MyCoast Maryland: Perform weekly audits of the MyCoast Maryland platform to ensure 100% data integrity of user-submitted flood reports and report summaries to the team. The fellow will develop messaging for the Coastal Management Program about how data can be used, and develop a slide deck to show community partners about the potential uses for MyCoast data in local planning activities and decision-making.
3. Strategic Research and Coastal State Review: The fellow will collaborate with other state agencies and use available tools to identify 3 -5 high-priority "Vulnerability Hotspots" where coastal flood risk and heat stress intersect across Maryland's coastal zone. The fellow will facilitate outreach with local partners in identified hotspots to validate findings and plan opportunities to understand coinciding hazard impacts. They will complete a comparative analysis of other coastal states to evaluate how they integrate heat considerations into Coastal Zone Management (CZM) strategies. The fellow will draft a white paper outlining 4-5 actionable approaches for the DNR and CMP to adopt, including potential policy or funding tools.

Preferred Candidate Experience and Skills

Experience in the following areas is preferred:

- Strong commitment to community-based outreach, engagement, and research, related to adaptation
- Excellent written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills (Ex. experience in public engagement, science communication, and youth education)

Additional information

This position requires applicants willing to work in field and/or on-site, in-state vehicle travel, and public speaking/community engagement. Some out of normal business hours may be required.

Maryland Coastal Fellowship Project 2: Resilient Restoration Permitting and Shoreline Programs

Primary Mentors and Project Team

Jon Stewart, MDE Tidal Wetlands Division, Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program

Laura Canton, DNR Coastal Management Program, Coastal Policy Coordinator

Other mentor/team collaborators

MDE Team -

Heather Hepburn, Tidal Wetlands Division, Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program

Matt Wallach, Tidal Wetlands Division, Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program

Miles Simmons, Tidal Wetlands Division, Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program

Kathryn Burcham, Tidal Wetlands Division, Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program

Melissa Knapp, Waterway Construction Division, Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program

Danielle Spendiff, Regulatory & Customer Service Division, Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program

DNR Team -

Catherine McCall, DNR Coastal Management Program

DNR shoreline and restoration program teams

Overview/Background and Project Description

A fellow will help to advance Maryland's NextGen Adaptation Plan resilient restoration and resilient permitting and regulatory outcomes by working jointly with the Department of Natural Resource's (DNR) Coastal Management Program (CMP) and CMP network partners at the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). A fellow will identify opportunities to simplify the permitting process to make the process of resilient restoration easier, support outreach and communication efforts around project implementation, and help to accelerate implementation of resilient nature-based projects. The fellow will work to review other states' approaches – such as Virginia's general permit and North Carolina – to identify ecosystem restoration project permitting options that incorporate resilience. The fellow will then develop proposed options

for updates, engage in shoreline loan and other funding program updates, and create communication products to increase understanding about shoreline and other nature-based project restoration.

Goals and Objectives

The following phases with associated goals and outcomes describe activities that this fellowship will address:

Phase 1 of this fellowship project focuses on **Research and Analysis** where the fellow will review Maryland's existing permitting structure and complete a comparative review of neighboring states' permitting structures (e.g., Virginia's general permit, North Carolina's program). Once this review is complete, the fellow will identify specific regulatory bottlenecks in Maryland for tidal wetlands restoration projects and propose options for adjustments. The fellow will work alongside DNR's shore erosion and resilience through restoration program teams to visit project sites and participate in loan forgiveness discussions to understand funding programs that help to incentivize living shoreline project implementation and common permitting discussions that could shape options development.

This work will address:

Goal 1: Streamline and Modernize the Permitting and Funding Processes

Objective: Identify opportunities to simplify Maryland's permitting process for resilient restoration. To accomplish this, the fellow will need to analyze how to balance conflicting goals (e.g., Time of Year restrictions vs. construction schedules), mitigating limitations caused by a lack of engineering expertise, and reviewing successful approaches from other states. To connect this permitting review to specific examples, the fellow will engage in ongoing project development and program implementation teams and site visits.

This Phase of the fellowship will result in two deliverables:

- (1) Tidal Wetlands Permitting Efficiency Report: A review of other states' permitting approaches (incorporating lessons from VA's general permit and NC as examples) with actionable recommendations for Maryland to simplify resilient restoration permitting. Crucially, the Fellow will assist in the selection and initial implementation of one to two of these key recommendations as a pilot initiative. An extension of this deliverable may also outline long-term funding options to inform a framework for long-term investments. Where appropriate, existing project sites will be used as examples to propose different outcomes or pathways depending on the options proposed.
- (2) Tidal Wetland Policy Brief & Data Package: A comprehensive data package that quantifies the benefits of tidal wetland restoration and as time permits, stream restoration and carbon sequestration, in terms that resonate with existing regulatory frameworks (e.g., Nitrogen/Phosphorus/Sediment removal, carbon credits, resiliency) to demonstrate cost-effectiveness.

Phase 2 of the fellowship will focus on **Framework Development** where the fellow will develop a co-benefits measurement framework, a policy brief, and associated data packages that quantify tidal wetland and nontidal stream restoration benefits.

This work will address:

Goal 2: Establish a Framework for Valuation and Co-Benefits.

Objective: Develop a system to document, measure, or quantify the comprehensive co-benefits of resiliency projects (including economic, health, and recreational impacts). By establishing clear performance metrics this will improve restoration work, clarify requirements, and further streamline the permitting process. By summarizing current project funding pathways, potential updates, and their co-benefits, this will provide direction about where funding programs can be adjusted to expand and incentivize implementation.

This Phase of the fellowship will result in two deliverables:

Co-Benefits Evaluation Framework: A simple framework with performance metrics designed to evaluate the economic, health, recreational, and public co-benefits of proposed wetland and habitat restoration projects.

Development for this Phase may include exploration of options such as the utility of General authorizations for living shoreline or ecological restoration projects, developing a draft license application to accommodate resilience, and idea generation around a separate ecological restoration process or one that integrates into the current process.

- (1) Proposals for updated application and funding programs. As proposals are developed and evaluated, the fellow will engage in options development - exploring draft updated applications and tools, identifying ways to connect updates to the shoreline manual, and augmenting coastal resiliency program investments by recommending specific green infrastructure techniques that should be considered. The fellow could bridge between tool-application-license processes and nature-based restoration techniques, funding, and adaptive management needs.

Phase 3 of the fellowship will focus on **Resource Creation** to draft a plain-language roadmap and build an initial iteration of a "Tidal Toolbox" repository and process documents for tidal wetlands restoration projects.

The "Tidal Toolbox" and Process Document goal and deliverable envisioned includes proposals for a centralized resource hub and repository outlining specific restoration techniques and scenarios for large marsh restoration. It includes a process document detailing how to apply these techniques based on existing conditions, alongside a framework for reviewing and updating the toolbox annually as new monitoring data becomes available.

Phase 4 of the fellowship will focus on **Deployment & Outreach** to distribute the roadmap through targeted channels (NGOs, SCDs, Extension offices) and launch the Tidal Toolbox with partner jurisdictions.

This work will address the following goal and objective and result in public-facing deliverables:
Goal 3: Build Capacity and Empower Stakeholders.

Objective: Overcome the capacity issues limiting tidal wetland restoration by providing plain-language guidance and creating a centralized repository of restoration techniques. This will ensure local jurisdictions and practitioners have the data and tools needed for large-scale marsh restoration.

Public-facing deliverable: With a Living Shoreline Stakeholder Work Group, develop a Plain-Language Restoration "Roadmap", a single-page, easy-to-understand guide detailing what practitioners can expect from project initiation and installation through monitoring. This will be formatted for broad distribution across NGO websites, county offices, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SCD), and Cooperative Extension channels. Additionally, the fellow will support development of communication and outreach materials for the restoration community and the public to increase understanding of the use of resilient restoration projects, funding opportunities, and engagement with the project planning, permitting, and implementation community.

Milestones and Outcomes

- Tidal Wetlands Permitting Efficiency Report
- Tidal Wetland Policy Brief & Data Package
- “Tidal Toolbox” and Process Document
- Plain-language restoration roadmap
- Resilient restoration communication and outreach materials

Preferred Candidate Experience and Skills

The following knowledge, skills, and/or experience are helpful, but not required:

- Experience with or knowledge of tidal wetlands and nontidal waterway construction regulations and permitting
- Experience with technical evaluation of eroding shorelines and shoreline erosion control projects
- **Coastal, Stream, and Shoreline Restoration Design:** Knowledge of or training or experience in specific restoration techniques, including Natural Channel Design, Regenerative Stream Conveyance Design, Valley Restoration Design, and Living Shoreline Design
- **Database Management:** Experience utilizing database computer programs to manage and analyze project data

Additional information

- 2-3 days/week at the MDE (Baltimore) and DNR (Annapolis) offices
- Field work to visit living shoreline and stream restoration sites is part of this project
- May require in-state and/or out-of-state travel
- Presentation of materials at DNR and MDE internal meetings
- Participate in public outreach opportunities with plain language tools

Fellowship Application

Applications should be submitted by email to fellowships@coastalstates.org by November 6.

To apply to one or both fellowship projects, please submit the following as a single PDF document:

1. Resume or Curriculum vitae (limit of two pages).
2. Education, experience, and career development statement. The applicant should submit a summary statement about their education, experience, and career development objectives and interests. This statement should emphasize abilities and expectations of the fellowship experience in terms of their career development. Each section can be answered separately OR be combined into one personal statement.

The 'Project Interest' statement (section one) should be a single sentence.

The 'Career Path and Objectives' statement (section two) should not exceed 750 words.

The 'Relevant Coursework and Position-Specific Skills' section (three) must not exceed one page and transcripts are optional.

- a) Section One: Project Interest (not included in word count)
 1. Please clearly state which project you are interested in, or if you are interested in both projects.
- b) Section Two: Career Path and Objectives (750 words)
 1. Consider addressing the following themes:
 1. How does your education or experience relate to the fellowship project(s) that you are interested in? How might that education or experience motivate you to advance the project or topic?
 2. How do you see a fellowship project supporting your professional development?
 3. What transferable knowledge, interests, or skills do you possess that would aid the Maryland Coastal Program in advancing the fellowship projects? You are welcome to highlight experiences from your personal, professional, and/or academic backgrounds.
 4. The fellowship provides a range of opportunities to develop skills, conduct research, engage partners and communities, and inform partner, program, and policy development. Discuss how you will embrace the concept of public service.
 5. Discuss a situation where you explored a new topic or challenge, how that experience went, and where you may have taken on a leadership role. Consider touching on what you learned from that experience.
3. Section Three: Relevant Coursework and Position-Specific Skills (not to exceed one page, single-spaced):

- a) The applicant should briefly discuss any relevant coursework or skills that would contribute to the fellowship project(s) of interest.
- b) Transcripts (optional) – Copies of all undergraduate and graduate student transcripts are encouraged, but not required (unofficial transcripts are welcome).

Frequently Asked Questions and Partner Roles

Q: What degree program does someone need to complete to be eligible for the fellowship?

Applicants must be a U.S. citizen complete a master's or other advanced degree in 2025 or 2026, to be eligible. We encourage candidates from a broad range of degree programs to apply because the projects have different focus areas. Fellows in similar programs and fellowships have had degrees in environmental studies, natural resource management, marine affairs, marine science, geology, public affairs, communications, and regional land management. The most important prerequisite is an interest in coastal issues.

Q: What is the length of a fellowship project?

Fellowship projects are for two years, subject to an annual renewal at the end of Year 1. The fellowship is anticipated to start by December 2026 and end in October 2028 (or at the end of a two-year term subject to funding extension approval). Some flexibility to start as late as January 2027 may be available. Newly selected fellows may have an opportunity to visit their host organizations prior to the start of the fellowship to meet the staff at their host organization and to look for housing.

Q: Does the place where applicants live determine eligibility?

Fellows must live in or relocate to Maryland, Washington DC, or Virginia by their start date to be eligible for a fellowship and full range of benefits.

Q: What is the salary for the Fellowship?

The current salary is \$55,000 per year.

Q: What other benefits, in addition to salary, are included as part of the fellowship?

Health and dental insurance, workers' compensation, relocation assistance or professional certification stipend, a supplies stipend, an annual reimbursement stipend for cell phone costs used as part of the fellowship, and travel reimbursement.

Q: Do fellows have contact with each other during the fellowship?

The two Maryland fellows will start at the same time or within a month of one another. The Maryland fellows will see each other in person at the DNR office and throughout their fellowships. Other Coastal Programs are also exploring similar programs within 6-9 months and the group of fellows may connect with each other through CSSF and the Coastal States Organization (CSO).

Q: What are the partner organization roles?

The Coastal States Stewardship Foundation and Coastal States Organization facilitate the fellow selection process by:

- receiving and processing the fellowship applicants
- participating in the fellow recommendation/selection panel
- providing logistical and programmatic support during the placement workshop
- providing salary and benefits for the fellows
- providing support and guidance to the fellows and mentors throughout the two-year fellowship
- providing networking opportunities across the coastal management-CSO network

The Maryland Coastal Management Program provides assistance and participates by

- participating in fellowship applicant screening and leading interviews
- developing the project proposal and network
- hosting fellows to work on the state projects, including provision of a workspace and office equipment (e.g. laptop)