



SOUTHEAST & CARIBBEAN DISASTER RESILIENCE PARTNERSHIP

SCDRP 9th ANNUAL MEETING
Wilmington, North Carolina
February 4-5, 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The [Southeast and Caribbean Disaster Resilience Partnership \(SCDRP\)](#) convened in-person during the SCDRP 9th Annual Meeting held at the Aloft Wilmington at Coastline Center

hotel in Wilmington, North Carolina, on February 4-5, 2025. With 130 registered attendees, the SCDRP 9th Annual Meeting was the largest in SCDRP history.

Philosophy. *SCDRP Annual Meetings are different.* SCDRP's flagship event is not your typical conference. SCDRP Annual Meetings are unique and distinguished convenings marked by the attendance of diverse, multi-sectoral professionals representing the private, academic, non-profit, and public sectors from a broad geographic region stretching across the Southeastern U.S. and Caribbean. Over two days, attendees enjoyed close networking with top organizations working to make a difference in the disaster resilience, recovery, and adaptation disciplines.

SCDRP Annual Meetings are intentionally small. During our gatherings, we all share in the entire experience; high-level speakers remain accessible to all, and we have the time and space for collective learning and collaborative development of ideas into future action plans. In order to ensure this, we aim to cap our meetings at 125 attendees. This was the 3rd year in a row that the SCDRP Annual Meeting has sold out!

SCDRP Annual Meetings are relevant by design. Throughout the planning process, we listen to our Partners and create the meeting agenda with them in mind. We incorporate timely issues and pressing topics that are important to our Partners and the organizations and communities that they represent. We cross geographic and political boundaries to bring together the brightest, most innovative leaders in the natural hazard resilience, climate adaptation, and disaster recovery fields in the U.S. Southeast and Caribbean. As we select speakers and topics and design educational field trips and networking events, we incorporate into the planning process a deep commitment to our core values of collaboration, learning, equity, and support. This commitment reveals itself through honest sharing, storytelling, eye-opening insights, laughter, thoughtful questions, cell phones full of new contacts, joyful reunions, high-fives, and hugs!

Theme. The theme of the SCDRP 9th Annual Meeting was **“Cultivating Climate-Resilient Communities: Advances in Communication and Collaboration.”** Each word of the theme is meaningful. **Cultivating...** Why the verb “cultivate?” Resilience isn't a quick fix or a one-size-fits-all solution. Building resilience takes time, dedication, and nurturing. We must nourish thoughtful development of plans and policies, intentional listening to community members, and careful implementation. While many communities across the region face the same natural hazards, each community's unique characteristics may warrant a different strategy to sow and grow the seeds of resilience. The phrase **“Climate-Resilient Communities”** reflects a focus on “whole communities.” SCDRP's vision is that communities across the Southeast and Caribbean will be better equipped to prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural hazards and disasters. Resilience supports the well-being of the entire community: people, infrastructure, and the natural environment. As we seek to cultivate Climate-Resilient Communities, we will dig deep to explore **“Advances in Communication and Collaboration.”** **Communication and Collaboration** are two threads that ran through each session and bound the agenda of this entire meeting together. Effective **communication** is critical to building trusting relationships for community resilience. The success of resilience initiatives depends upon the transparent communication of information, resources, plans, and feedback between practitioners, governments, and communities. Transparent communication and decision-making processes can help build trust, enabling communities to feel empowered, engaged, and confident in building long-lasting, whole community resilience. **Collaboration...** SCDRP believes in the power of collaboration to unlock potential. The vision of climate-resilient communities will not be realized by any one person or entity. Cultivating communities that are resilient to natural hazards and disasters takes cooperation between all levels of community, government, and industry. From the community champion advocating for the members of their neighborhood, to the Resilience Officer working at the state level to secure policies and plans for resilience, every voice is essential to cultivating equitable resilience. The SCDRP Annual Meeting provides opportunities to forge new partnerships, develop joint projects, and create collaborative initiatives with the people that you meet here.

Meeting Attendees. The registered attendees of the SCDRP 9th Annual Meeting in Wilmington reflected the multi-sectoral nature of the Partnership. This year, roughly a third of attendees were from the academic sector. Another third of attendees were government employees – working for either the Federal government, a State/Territory, or a Local Government. The final third of attendees was split between the non-profit and private sectors. The geographic breakdown of where attendees come from always reflects where the SCDRP Annual Meeting is held. This is precisely why the SCDRP Annual Meeting moves around each year. This helps our Partners overcome travel restrictions and periodically ease the budgetary burden to any one area. Typically, about half of our attendees come from the State in which the meeting is held, and this year was no different. North Carolinians comprised almost half of the meeting's attendees. Additionally, professionals from Florida

represented about 16%, and South Carolina represented about 15%. Georgia representatives were the smallest piece of the pie at 9%. Interestingly, SCDRP Annual Meetings are experiencing a growth in attendance from other locations beyond the southeastern states. Thirteen percent of the registrations represented attendees from other states and the U.S. territories in the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands). Attendees traveled from nearby areas, such as Louisiana, Virginia, Maryland, and Washington D.C., while others traveled from as far as Michigan and Massachusetts!

Pre-Meeting Events. The SCDRP 9th Annual Meeting began with a strategic in-person **SCDRP Advisory Board Meeting** to discuss business, conduct the annual Officer Election, and review accomplishments, including the SCDRP 2024 Impact Report. The Advisory Board meeting wrapped up with committee break-out sessions to establish committee goals for 2025.

As SCDRP Annual Meeting attendees arrived in Wilmington, evening events featured the first-ever **Mentor/Mentee Meet-up** for members of Cohort #1 of the new SCDRP Mentorship Program and **Monday Night Mixer** at the [Palate Bottle Shop and Garden](#). This was the first opportunity for many of the Mentor/Mentee Pairs to meet each other in-person! The Mentor/Mentee Meet-up is expected to be held annually during the SCDRP Annual Meetings, and the cohorts will build upon each other. With each year's meet-up and reunion, the support and connections are expected to grow over time. The Mentor/Mentee Meet-up organically flowed into the Monday Night Mixer for all attendees to begin to meet and greet each other.

Day 1. The SCDRP 9th Annual Meeting officially kicked off with welcoming remarks from Craig Harris, the Emergency Management and Resiliency Coordinator for the City of Wilmington, North Carolina. The Day 1 Keynote Kick-off Address was delivered by Dr. Amanda Martin, the Chief Resilience Officer for the State of North Carolina.

After the inspirational keynote address, Day 1 sessions began with resilience updates from the Southeastern states and U.S. Caribbean territories and a thought-provoking panel discussion centered on crossing jurisdictional boundaries to reach toward regional resilience. The next session highlighted entities and institutions partnering with community-based organizations in productive and transformative collaborative projects. Additional partnerships spawned from this panel discussion, and new collaborative initiatives are ongoing! After lunch, representatives from a consulting firm, an academic institution, and an environmental advocacy nonprofit came together to provide case studies and cutting-edge advancements pertaining to living shorelines, nature-based solutions, and nearshore coastal armoring. The discussion was largely focused on overcoming permitting challenges and quantifying the co-benefits of these strategies. Next, SCDRP hosted our first-ever Super Collider Poster Session, which attracted many graduate and undergraduate student poster submissions and provided exceptional networking time for attendees.

For the remainder of the afternoon, attendees were divided into groups and shuttled to the Battleship Experience Field Trip. This 2-hour field trip provided an engaging, interactive experience to learn more about Eagle Island's historical, ecological, and forward-looking significance. Participants rotated through four themed stations in small groups, allowing for direct interaction with experts and fostering a more personalized learning experience. Each station highlighted a unique aspect of Eagle Island, the Cape Fear River, or the Living with Water Project, from historical conservation to environmental monitoring and sustainable engineering, aligning with the commitment to advancing understanding of the ecological importance and community role. This Battleship Experience Field Trip brought together 12 speakers representing different groups that work collaboratively at the Battleship North Carolina site, including representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wilmington District, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Moffatt & Nichol, and Battleship North Carolina. Day 1 ended with a casual Tuesday Night Rendezvous at Tequila's Waterfront restaurant overlooking the Cape Fear River in downtown Wilmington.

Day 2. The second day of the SCDRP 9th Annual Meeting enthusiastically began with the Day 2 Keynote Kick-off Address from Dr. Rajni Shankar-Brown from Stetson University in Deland, Florida. This inspirational presentation connected to the next panel discussion which focused on communicating and connecting with underserved communities to build resilience. A number of creative collaborative ideas were born from this panel as well, and these partnerships will continue long after the Annual Meeting! The next session was composed of emergency managers, and the conversation highlighted new resources and advances in disaster recovery for resilient futures. After lunch, the next session entitled "Truth in the Storm: Effective Strategies for Climate and Disaster Communication" featured speakers with experience in communication from different perspectives including NOAA, a faith-based organization, broadcast meteorology, science museum, and academic research. The next event was a Special Session on SCDRP Regional Initiatives, which featured a discussion of the value of mentoring with several of the Mentors and Mentees from Cohort #1 of the new SCDRP Mentorship Program. Immediately following this Special Session was a second Super Collider Poster Session and Prospective Mentor/Mentee Huddle. During the next short Special Session, NOAA colleagues provided an update on the Atlas 15 extreme precipitation database construction, uses, and applications for building resilience in communities throughout the region including the U.S. Caribbean territories. The last session of Day 2 focused on innovative government collaborations and funding strategies. SCDRP Executive Director, Heather McCarthy, provided wrap-up and closing remarks for the SCDRP 9th Annual Meeting in Wilmington, North Carolina.

Post-Meeting Events. A number of SCDRP 9th Annual Meeting attendees were invited to participate in a closed roundtable discussion hosted by the Duke University Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment & Sustainability entitled "A Stafford Act for the 21st Century." The Duke Roundtable brought together the diverse perspectives and insights of

21 leading professionals in the fields of emergency management and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery to evaluate the strengths and shortcomings of the current Stafford Act and develop recommendations for modernizing and adapting the Stafford Act to 21st-century risks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SCDRP extends deep gratitude to the **57 guest speakers and moderators**, who brought extensive knowledge, experience, and local, state, regional, and international perspectives to share with others.

The exceptional accomplishments of this meeting were made possible by the dedicated **30 Steering Committee Members** who volunteered their time over four months to bring the meeting together by proposing relevant and timely topics, developing the meeting's overarching theme, inviting speakers and exhibitors, designing panel discussions, organizing field trips and activities, and finalizing a myriad of logistics.

SCDRP 9th ANNUAL MEETING 2025 STEERING COMMITTEE:

- Brian Byfield, Resilient Communities Program Manager North Carolina Office of Recovery & Resiliency (NCORR), Raleigh, NC
- Amber O'Quinn, Office Manager, Homewatch CareGivers, St. Pete, Florida
- Allyssa Zebrowski, SE Regional Preparedness Coordinator, NOAA Disaster Preparedness Program | Genwest, North Charleston, SC
- Jeremy Stalker, Associate Professor of Marine Science, Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, FL
- Josiah 'Jazz' Watts, Vulnerable Communities Initiative, Inc. and Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, Sapelo Island, GA
- Kait Morano, Resilience Planning Director & Research Scientist II, Coastal Equity and Resilience Hub, Georgia Tech, Savannah, GA
- Kasen Wally, Coastal Resiliency Specialist, NC Division of Coastal Management, Morehead City, NC
- Kim Leonard, Development & Outreach Coordinator, Savannah Riverkeeper, Savannah, GA
- Luke Roberson, Community Engagement and Outreach Coordinator, Institute for Water and Health at Georgia Southern University; Savannah, GA
- Knellee Bislam, Founder & CEO, AHAM Education Inc., Miami, FL
- Mackenzie Todd, Coastal Resiliency Coordinator, North Carolina Division of Coastal Management, Morehead City, NC
- Maggie Steenburg, Assistant Director, Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management, Doral, FL
- Mariko Polk, Coastal Processes Specialist, North Carolina Sea Grant, Wilmington, NC

- Megan Shaw, Office and Events Manager, SECOORA, Cincinnati, OH
- Ren Martin, Eco-Justice Program Coordinator, North Carolina Council of Churches, Raleigh, NC
- Christine M. Crespo Valentín, Landscape Architect, Jacobs, Tampa, FL
- David Johnston, Founder & CEO, Hamilton Advisors, LLC, Charleston, SC
- Meredith Hovis, Assistant Professor, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Wilmington, NC
- Donya Frank-Gilchrist, Research Oceanographer, US Geological Survey, St. Petersburg Coastal and Marine Science Center, St. Petersburg, FL
- Duane De Freese, Executive Director, The Indian River Lagoon NEP, Florida
- Garry Harris, President/CEO, Sustainability Solutions Group and Institute, Hampton Roads VA/Atlanta GA
- Geno Olmi, Retired, formerly with NOAA for 27 years, Johns Island, SC
- Jason Fleming, Principal Consultant, Seahorse Consulting, Morehead City, NC
- Sharon Mesick, Director, NOAA Southern Regional Climate Services, Gulfport Mississippi
- Stephanie Kelly, Professional Landscape Architect, Earth Matters Planning & Design, PLLC, Wilmington, NC
- Susannah Tuttle, Southeast Climate & Energy Network (SCEN), Raleigh, NC
- Trinity Johnson, Doctoral Student, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA
- Anne Cabrera, Vice President, SWCA Environmental Consultants, Fort Lauderdale, FL
- Victoria Olivia, Meteorologist, NOAA National Weather Service, Wilmington, NC
- Vamsi Sridharan, Water Resources Innovation Manager, Tetra Tech, Fairfax, VA

SCDRP 9th ANNUAL MEETING 2025 SPONSORS:

Sponsors make it possible for SCDRP Annual Meeting attendees to continue forging innovative partnerships across boundaries and sectors to link professionals in emergency management, climate adaptation, environmental justice, resilience funding, and disaster preparation, response, and recovery throughout the Southeast and Caribbean. Sponsorship funds were used to lower the cost of registration for attendees, support conference-related expenses including field trips, and provide need-based registration scholarships to members. Registration scholarships were provided to **10** college students and non-profit staff who provided valuable logistical assistance throughout the meeting as greeters, timekeepers, and runners. The scholarships were awarded based on a competitive application process.

GOLD (\$5,000+) SPONSORS:

- Battleship North Carolina (equivalent in-kind contributions)
- SWCA Environmental Consultants
- Miami-Dade County, Florida

SILVER (\$2,500+) SPONSORS:

- NOAA Office for Coastal Management
- Hagerty Consulting
- North Carolina Division of Coastal Management
- EJ (Environmental Justice) Strong and the University of South Carolina Arnold School of Public Health

BRONZE PLUS (\$1,500+) SPONSORS:

- Center for Sustainable Communities

BRONZE (\$1,000+) SPONSORS:

- Perkins & Will
- South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium
- Tetra Tech, Inc.
- Moffatt & Nichol, Inc.
- University of Georgia Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant

SCDRP GROUP MEMBERS:

SCDRP Group Members provide the backbone of support for SCDRP activities all year long.

BENEFACTORS (\$5,000+):

- SECOORA (Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association), a registered 501(c)(3) who serves as the fiscal and administrative home of SCDRP.
- Indian River Lagoon Council and IRL National Estuarine Research Reserve

SUSTAINING PARTNERS (\$2,500+):

- NOAA Southeast & Caribbean Team (SECART)
- IEM

SUPPORTING PARTNERS (\$1,000+):

- Miami-Dade County
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resources Division
- Moffatt & Nichol
- Institute for Building Technology & Safety (IBTS)

SCDRP 9th ANNUAL MEETING 2025 REGISTRATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS:

- Matthew Hatami
- Luke Roberson
- Wendy Prudencio
- Josephine Justin
- Amber O'Quinn
- Ren Martin
- Kelly White-Singleton
- Emmanuel Maldonado-Gonzalez

- Morgan Kondratick
- Brylie King
- Diego Morales
- Demi Sperelekes
- Claire Brovold
- Laura LeBree

MEETING MATERIALS:

- [SCDRP 9th ANNUAL MEETING 2025 Agenda](#)
- [SCDRP 9th ANNUAL MEETING 2025 Full Meeting Program](#)
- [SCDRP 9th Annual Meeting Session Resources Links for Reference](#)

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE SCDRP 9TH ANNUAL MEETING 2025:

- [Gallery of Meeting Photos](#) (photos taken by Luke Robertson and Amber O'Quinn)
- [Battleship North Carolina Field Trip Photos](#) (Field Trip Photos taken by Alan Cradick, Alan Cradick Photography)

RECORDINGS OF MEETING SESSIONS:

- [Day 1 9th Annual Meeting Welcome Address: Heather McCarthy, SCDRP](#)
- [Day 1 Welcome Address: Craig Harris, City of Wilmington, North Carolina](#)
- [Day 1 Keynote Speaker: Dr. Amanda Martin, Chief Resilience Officer, North Carolina](#)
- [Session 1: Resilience Updates from the States and Territories](#)
- [Session 2: Entities and Institutions Partnering with Community-Based Organizations](#)
- [Session 3: Co-Benefits of Living Shorelines, Nature-Based Solutions, & Nearshore Coastal Armoring](#)
- [Day 2 Keynote Speaker: Dr. Rajni Shankar-Brown, Stetson University](#)
- [Session 4: Communicating and Connecting with Underserved Communities to Build Resilience](#)
- [Session 5: Resilient Futures – Advances in Disaster Recovery](#)
- [Session 6: Truth in the Storm: Effective Strategies for Climate and Disaster Communication](#)
- [Special Session: SCDRP Regional Initiatives and Mentorship Panel](#)
- [Special Session: Atlas 15: Building Resilience to the Impacts of Extreme Precipitation](#)
- [Session 7: Innovative Government Collaborations and Funding Strategies](#)
- [SCDRP 9th Annual Meeting Closing Remarks](#)

SCDRP 2024 ADVISORY BOARD:

- Chair and Florida Seat: Duane DeFreese, Indian River Lagoon Council

- Vice-Chair and Non-Profit Organization Seat: Ashley Ward, Duke University Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment & Sustainability
- At-Large Executive Committee Member and Georgia Seat: Kait Morano, Coastal Equity and Resilience (CEAR) Hub, Georgia Tech
- North Carolina Seat: Brian Byfield, North Carolina Department of Public Safety
- South Carolina Seat: Amanda Guthrie, South Carolina Sea Grant
- Puerto Rico Seat: Lilian Ramirez Durand, University of Puerto Rico Sea Grant
- U.S. Virgin Islands Seat: Hilary Lohmann, USVI Division of Coastal Zone Management
- Non-Profit Organization Seat: Patrick Howell, Institute for Building Technology & Safety (IBTS)
- Academic Institution Seat: Richard DeVoe, College of Charleston
- Academic Institution Seat: Jeremy Stalker, Jacksonville University
- Local Government Seat: James Murley, Miami-Dade County
- Local Government Seat: Randall Mathews, Chatham Emergency Management Agency
- Federal Government Seat: Katharine Egan, NOAA Southeast and Caribbean Team
- Private Sector Seat: Hollie Janson Schmitt, Jacobs
- Private Sector Seat: Jeff Morris, Moffatt & Nichol
- Ex-officio (Fiscal Agent): Debra Hernandez, SECOORA