



Keynote and Plenary Speakers

Speaker bios and headshots

Plenary on Monday, December 9th

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**For final schedule please refer to the Reef Futures Mobile Application. Subject to change.*

Plenary and Keynote

Monday, December 9th. 8:15 AM - 13:30 PM



Dr. Anastazia Banaszak

Research Professor
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Anastazia was born in Brisbane, Australia and studied marine biology at James Cook University. She got her PhD from the University of California at Santa Barbara followed by a Smithsonian Institution postdoctoral fellowship. Since 1999, she has been a research professor at the Reef Systems Academic Unit in Puerto Morelos, campus of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, heading the Integrative Reef Conservation Research Lab. The focus is to understand the reproductive biology and ecology of corals, apply this knowledge to low cost, coral restoration programs and build capacity throughout the Caribbean region.



Dr. Tali Vardi

Executive Director
Coral Restoration Consortium

Dr. Tali Vardi is the Executive Director of the Coral Restoration Consortium (CRC), the global community of practice for the field of coral restoration - connecting scientists and practitioners, and providing the gold-standard of products to move the field forward. Tali brings 25 years of experience and has authored over 20 publications in the fields of habitat restoration, coral reef ecology and intervention science, as well as international policy, advocacy, and community building. She has been at the center of the coral restoration movement for over a decade, co-founding the CRC during her 11 years as a coral scientist at NOAA. Tali is a mom, swimmer, SCUBA diver, big laughter, and has recently started learning how to harmonize Bluegrass music.



Peter Forbes

Co-Founder of *First Light*
Owner of *Knoll Farm*

Peter's life work is about the convening of people across differences of history, race, class and ideology to reconcile matters of consequence to their shared future. Peter is a core team member of [First Light](#), an ambitious effort between 65 organizations in Maine and the Wabanaki people to increase their presence and sovereignty on the land. He has played significant roles in similar efforts in [Alaska](#) and [Oregon](#). Peter was also the founding director of Center for Whole Communities and a vice president at Trust for Public Land. He has photographed for National Geographic and Smithsonian magazines and is the author of 6 books on people and place. Peter is also the owner of [Knoll Farm](#), an organic fruit farm and community gathering place in the mountains of Vermont where he and his partner, Helen, raised their family.

Plenary and Keynote

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Dr. Peter Mumby

Professional Research Fellows
The University of Queensland

Professor Peter Mumby began his career helping to design marine reserves in Belize and experienced first hand the limited scientific basis for decision-making. His research combines field observations, experiments, and ecological modeling to answer questions about ecosystem resilience, impacts of climate change, marine reserve functioning and design, connectivity of ecosystems, coral reef fisheries, and restoration. Peter is a Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation, winner of the inaugural ISRS Mid-Career Award. He has published more than 400 papers, has an h-index of 116, and is an ISI Highly Cited Researcher. He is happiest on a coral reef with a camera in his hands.



Dr. David Suggett

Chief Scientist
KAUST Restoration Initiative

David Suggett is a Professor in Practice at KAUST, and Chief Scientist for the KAUST Coral Restoration Initiative (KCRI). He has worked for >20 years to unlock how environmental and climate change shapes capacity for corals – and coral reefs – to thrive and survive. He was previously Professor in Marine Biology at University of Technology Sydney (leading the Future Reefs Program), where he co-founded and was the inaugural lead for Australia's at scale community-led restoration network, the Coral Nurture Program, on the Great Barrier Reef. He serves on the Advisory Board to the Coral Restoration Consortium and previously chaired their field-based coral propagation working group.



Dr. Marc Gillan

Associate Vice President Of Technologies and Special Projects
National Transformation Institute - KAUST

Prof Mark Gillan is Associate Vice President of Technologies and Special Projects, in the National Transformation Institute (NTI), at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST). Mark leads a diverse portfolio of large projects, from the world's largest coral restoration initiative at Shushah Island (KCRI), in collaboration with NEOM, to Cryogenic Carbon Capture, to KAUST SMART, which has a sustainability and integrated multimodal transport focus. The portfolio includes a number of embryonic opportunities, all aimed at accelerating impact.

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Dr. Line Bay

Research Director

Reef Recovery, Adaptation, and Restoration Program, AIMS

Born in Denmark and now a long-time resident of Australia, Line has dedicated the past three decades to understanding and preserving the Great Barrier Reef. After earning her PhD in coral reef science from James Cook University in 2006, she furthered her research as a post-doctoral fellow at the Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies from 2007 to 2011. In 2011, Line joined the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) as a Research Scientist to focus on coral adaptation to climate change. Her research expertise spans genetics, ecology, and the evolution of coral reef organisms, with over 65 peer-reviewed publications in high-impact journals. Currently, as the Research Director of AIMS's Reef Recovery, Adaptation and Restoration Program, Line leads a dynamic team of approximately 70 scientists, technical staff, and higher degree students. The Program's work emphasizes innovative methods for coral conservation aquaculture, exploring natural and assisted evolution of corals and their symbionts, and developing new prognostic tools for reef health and adaptation.

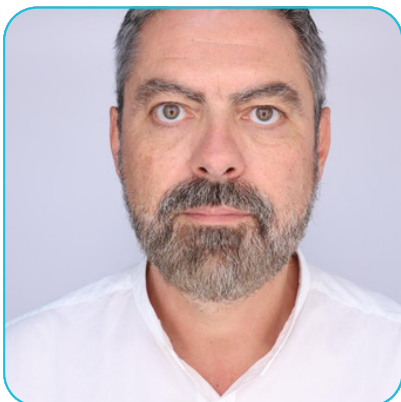


Dr. Paul Marshall

Head

NEOM Nature Reserve

Paul is responsible for leading the visionary program to conserve 95% of NEOM (25,000 km²) as a protected area spanning spectacular red deserts, snow-capped mountains, vibrant coral reefs and deep ocean habitats. Paul has established an international reputation for developing and delivering collaborative programs that have strong strategic foundation, ambitious but realisable goals, broad stakeholder buy-in and accountable delivery mechanisms. He has authored over 80 peer-reviewed articles, including internationally significant reports and books. He coordinated NEOM's first State of the Environment Report and has co-authored 5 papers on Red Sea ecology and management during his tenure at NEOM.



Deni Porej

Marine Conservation Director

NEOM

A native of Serbia, a landlocked country in Southeastern Europe, I am now the Marine Conservation Director at NEOM, where I lead the creation and implementation of a comprehensive marine conservation program. This program is dedicated to protecting and restoring biodiversity in the Red Sea while also crafting exceptional visitor experiences for our future guests. My responsibilities include overseeing Marine Spatial Planning, the national designation and activation of Marine Protected Areas, biodiversity monitoring, and a range of active conservation measures. Over my career, I have worked across the Mediterranean, Asia, North and South America, and the Pacific on diverse and impactful projects—from crocodile farming and invasive species management to wetland construction, MPA designation, EU policy reform, small-scale fisheries, and argan oil production in Morocco.

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Dr. R Scott Winters

Chair - *Coral Restoration Consortium*
CEO - *Coral Restoration Foundation*

Scott is a serial entrepreneur of 15 years following a career as an academic scientist. His ventures have ranged from entertainment, through consumer goods to healthcare. Highlights of his career include the development of the world's most technologically advanced pediatric cancer center. He has served on the board of directors for multiple entrepreneurial ventures as well as international non-profits. Throughout his career he has published 2 books, over 50 technical articles and popular papers, and amassed over 750 hours of public speaking. Scott received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in two simultaneous programs (Ecology, Evolution and Biodiversity and Bioinformatics and Computational Biology), received his M.B.A. from the Wharton School of Business, and is Phi Beta Kappa. Scott's passion for ocean conservation brought him to the Florida Keys to inspire others to help save our ocean.



Tom Moore

Reef Futures Director - *Coral Restoration Consortium*
CEO - *Global Coral Solutions*

Tom is a quick-thinking proven conservation leader, working to make coral restoration relevant at scale while trying to ensure that the smaller efforts that got us to where we are today don't get left behind in the process. A firm believer that connecting to people and developing personal relationships is the best way to lead teams and affect global change. Tom was the founder and currently serves as the Director of the Reef Futures in an all volunteer capacity. He is a Senior Advisor to the KAUST Coral Restoration Initiative and was privileged to lead the founding team that launched the large-scale coral reef conservation effort in the northern Red Sea. Tom supports other emerging initiatives through his consultancy Global Coral Solutions.



Michelle Loewe

Coordinator - *Coral Restoration Consortium*
Marine Habitat Resource Specialist - *NOAA*

Michelle joined NOAA's Restoration Center in 2019 after a decade of travel working on the ocean in the marine construction industry. She received her undergraduate degree in Supply Chain Management from Michigan State University and her Master's Degree in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation from Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Michelle's work focuses on providing technical assistance for the development, implementation, and management of coral restoration projects in the Caribbean. She has been with the CRC since 2018, initially as a volunteer for the Genetics Working Group, and now serves as a lead coordinator for the Coral Restoration Consortium and Reef Futures.

Plenary and Keynote

Monday, December 9th. 8:15 AM - 13:30 PM

Panelists for, “How Did We Get Here? The History of Reef Restoration”



Dr. David Suggett

Chief Scientist
KAUST Restoration Initiative



Dr. Apple Pui Yi Chi

Research Assistant Professor
The Chinese University of Hong Kong



Dr. Phanor Montoya-Maya

Restoration Program Manager
Coral Restoration Foundation

Moderated by,



Troy Johnson

Chair
Indigenous Reef Advisory Committee



Dr. Joseph Pollock

Senior Reef Strategy Lead,
Hawai'i and Palmyra Programs
The Nature Conservancy

Plenary and Keynote

Monday, December 9th. 8:15 AM - 13:30 PM

Global Restoration Showcase



Gildas Todinanahary

Senior Lecturer
Head of Training Department
*Institut Halieutique et des Sciences
Marines, Université de Toliara*



Senyacen Ramirez

Marine Biologist
Tela Marine Research Center

Plenary and Keynote

Thursday, December 12th. 8:15 AM - 13:30 PM



Dr. Stuart Sandin

Senior Director and Professor

Center for Environmental Imaging SCRIPPS, University of California, San Diego

Stuart Sandin is the senior director of the Center for Environmental Imaging in San Diego (California, USA). CEI was founded to open access to technologies allowing us to archive imagery of the underwater world and to create digital replicas of these ecosystems. CEI was founded out of Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego, where Dr. Sandin is a professor holding the Elizabeth and Dene Oliver Chair in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation.



Jessica Levy

Coordinator - *Coral Restoration Consortium*

Director of Coral Restoration Strategy - *Coral Restoration Foundation*

Jess is originally from North Carolina but relocated to Florida following graduate school abroad. She started her career with the Coral Restoration Foundation as their Restoration Program Manager, working to develop coral nursery and restoration program throughout the Florida Keys. After 8 years and as the program continued to grow, she moved into her current role as the Director of Coral Restoration Strategy. In addition to her role with CRF, she is also one of the lead coordinators for the Coral Restoration Consortium. Jess has been working for the CRC since its inception in 2017. Currently she is focused on helping to establish greater connectivity throughout the globe by supporting our network of Regional Groups. Jess also serves as the fiduciary liaison between CRC and CRF, and is a key member of the Reef Futures planning committee.



Rose Huizenga

Founder

Coral Catch, Gili Air-Indonesia

Rose Huizenga is driven by a deep passion for initiatives that empower individuals to create meaningful impacts. A proud mother of two young girls, Rose wears many hats: conservationist, writer, master scuba dive instructor, boutique hotel owner, and co-founder of Gili Air's first international school. Her latest endeavor, Coral Catch, is an award-winning coral restoration scholarship program that equips local women with the tools and knowledge to make a significant impact both on land and underwater. By focusing on coral restoration and female empowerment, Coral Catch addresses two urgent challenges: the degradation of coral ecosystems and the underrepresentation of women in marine science. Rose's vision is for the program to serve as a model, expanding beyond Indonesia and fostering a new generation of women leaders in conservation. What sets Rose apart is her fresh approach to conservation. She measures success not just by the number of reefs restored, but by the lives transformed.

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Dr. Peter Mumby

Professional Research Fellows
The University of Queensland

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Dr. Cedric Robillot

Executive Director
Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program, Great Barrier Reef Foundation

Dr. Cedric Robillot is the Executive Director of the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program (www.gbrrestoration.org), a \$165M R&D program run by a consortium of Australian research agencies and universities, and funded by the Australian Government through the Reef Trust Partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. Cedric is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Queensland School of Biological Sciences, holds a PhD in environmental toxicology from the National Museum of Natural History in Paris and an engineering degree from the Paris School of Physics and Chemistry (ESPCI). He has 20 years' experience tackling big health and environmental challenges, in both the private and public sectors, from startups to large infrastructure and R&D programs.



Dr. Jon Daly

Cryopreservation Leader
Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program

Dr. Jonathan Daly has worked on cryopreservation in aquatic species for over 20 years and leads biorepository development for corals on the Great Barrier Reef as part of the federally-funded Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program. His research is on the development, upscaling, and implementation of cryopreservation technologies and the establishment of biorepository systems and processes in Australia and internationally.

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Dr. Tali Vardi

Executive Director
Coral Restoration Consortium

Dr. Tali Vardi is the Executive Director of the Coral Restoration Consortium (CRC), the global community of practice for the field of coral restoration - connecting scientists and practitioners, and providing the gold-standard of products to move the field forward. Tali brings 25 years of experience and has authored over 20 publications in the fields of habitat restoration, coral reef ecology and intervention science, as well as international policy, advocacy, and community building. She has been at the center of the coral restoration movement for over a decade, co-founding the CRC during her 11 years as a coral scientist at NOAA. Tali is a mom, swimmer, SCUBA diver, big laughter, and has recently started learning how to harmonize Bluegrass music.



Jennifer Moore

Senior Manager - Mission: Iconic Reefs
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Originally from New Jersey, Jennifer fell in love with the ocean visiting the shore every summer and solidified her desire to dedicate her life to it while attending Sea Camp in the Florida Keys as a teenager. Jennifer has worked on the conservation of Caribbean corals her entire career. She joined NOAA in 2003 and listed the first-ever corals as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2006. Jennifer is the author of several ESA regulations and led the drafting of the Elkhorn and Staghorn Coral Recovery Plan. Jennifer has been a celebrated NOAA resource manager for over two decades, winning numerous awards, including the Department of Commerce Gold Medal, for her outstanding accomplishments. Currently, Jennifer focuses on the recovery of the threatened Caribbean coral reef ecosystem as the Senior Manager for Mission: Iconic Reefs at the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.



Erika Harms

Global Director of Sustainability - Science, Innovation, & Destinations
Iberostar, Wave of Change Hub

Erika Harms is the Global Director of Sustainability - Science, Innovation & Destinations at Iberostar leading the Wave of Change hub and wider cross-departmental team towards Iberostar's shared goals to implement regenerative tourism, and drive the responsible tourism agenda. Erika oversees a team of experts, collaborating with leading stakeholders in the public sector, private industry, and academia to research, measure, and support initiatives that foster responsible tourism and measurable impact. This effort is embodied in Iberostar's Wave of Change movement, which drives transformational strategies across five key areas of action: Circular Economy, Nature-based Solutions, Blue Foods, Climate Action and Destination Stewardship.

Plenary and Keynote

Thursday, December 12th. 8:15 AM - 13:30 PM

Panelists for, “Where are we going? The Future of Reef Restoration”



Dr. Nicole Crane

Senior Conservation Scientist
One People One Reef
Executive Director
David H Smith Conservation
Research Fellowship



Dr. Daniel Wangpraseurt

Associate Researcher
SCRIPPS



Diwi Valiente

Senior Program Manger
Wildlife Conservation Society

Moderated by,



Dr. Liv Williamson

Program Manager
Revive and Restore



Dr. Joseph Pollock

Senior Reef StrategyLead,
Hawai'i and Palmyra Programs
The Nature Conservancy

Plenary and Keynote

Thursday, December 12th. 8:15 AM - 13:30 PM

Global Restoration Showcase



Dr. Austin Bowden-Kerby

Founder
Corals4Conservation
Teitei Homestay | Permaculture Farm



Luca Saponari

Senior Science & Technical Field Officer
Nature Seychelles | Reef Rescuers