



**SOUTHEAST & CARIBBEAN DISASTER
RESILIENCE PARTNERSHIP
(SCDRP) 8th ANNUAL MEETING
Savannah, Georgia
January 23-24, 2024**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The [Southeast and Caribbean Disaster Resilience Partnership \(SCDRP\)](#) convened in person for the SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting held at The DeSoto Hotel in Savannah, Georgia, on January 23-24, 2024. With 127 registered attendees, the SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting was the Partnership's largest meeting to date!

Philosophy. Attendees of the SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting came together with the common recognition that the equitable preparation of our communities for our collective future cannot be achieved through individual offices or organizations. Instead, SCDRP Members recognize that professionals in emergency management, climate adaptation, resilience, and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery must work and act together to reach beyond individual mandates and vested interests. Continuing efforts to advance disaster resilience in the U.S. Southeast and Caribbean must cross disciplines, professional sectors, and political and geographic boundaries.



Figure 1. Advisory Board Chair, Lindy Betzhold (NOAA) leads an in-person discussion with the SCDRP Advisory Board in Savannah.

Theme. The theme of the SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting was "*Moving the Needle Toward Equitable Community Resilience to Natural Hazards.*"

Throughout the field trips, activities, and speaker sessions, attendees explored how they might partner across professional sectors and work across political and geographic boundaries within our region. Speakers and panelists highlighted case studies and successful climate resilience initiatives, innovative public-private partnerships, strategies to address

inequities, and the application of cutting-edge data tools and technologies. In line with the mission of SCDRP, meeting attendees used this valuable time together to make strides toward the vision that communities across the U.S. Southeast and Caribbean will be significantly more resilient to episodic and chronic impacts due to climate change, natural hazards, and disasters. With this overarching theme in mind, SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting attendees gathered in Historic Downtown Savannah to push the needle even further toward equitable resilience for all communities within the U.S. Southeast and Caribbean.



Figure 2. SCDRP Executive Director (Heather McCarthy), Assistant Program Coordinator (Ricardo Mercado), Program Coordinator (Tina Jackson), and Advisory Board Member (Dr. Ashley Ward) explore Savannah while walking to the office of Chatham County Emergency Management.

Meeting Attendees. The SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting in Savannah was marked by a number of new faces, including community residents and leaders that work on the frontlines of environmental justice and climate adaptation efforts in their local neighborhoods. The sharing of personal stories, perspectives, and experiences was well-received as informative and insightful. The broad diversity of attendees was representative of SCDRP’s multi-sectoral and regional status. The Academic, Non-profit, Governmental and Private sectors had nearly equal representation among meeting attendees. By numbers, the sector with the greatest representation at the SCDRP 8th Annual

Meeting was the Academic sector. A little over one in four attendees worked or studied at a college or university. Another one in four attendees represented a non-profit organization. This constitutes more non-profit attendees at an SCDRP Meeting than ever! One in five attendees worked within the Private sector for a company, business, or industry. Lastly, one in four attendees represented the public sector, working at various levels of government within the region. Most of these government employees were employed by a State or Territory Government, with the remaining working at the Federal or Local levels of government.

Geographically, the profile of the SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting attendees represented the entire footprint of the SCDRP region. Over half of attendees were from Georgia. Roughly one fifth of attendees were from South Carolina, one fifth from Florida, and one fifth from North Carolina. A smaller number of attendees traveled from Washington DC, Virginia, Texas, Kansas, Ohio, Maine, and from the U.S. Caribbean territories of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands.



Figure 3. Tour guide Alan Robertson (AWR Strategic Consulting) explains the design, permitting, funding, and maintenance of a dune construction/restoration project on the beach at Tybee Island.

Pre-Meeting Events. The SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting began with a strategic in-person Advisory Board Meeting to review yearly accomplishments and discuss annual goals and priorities. Next, SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting attendees spent an afternoon on a Tybee Island Resilience Tour led and sponsored by AWR Strategic Consulting. Tybee Island’s award-winning resilience initiatives have received national recognition for their innovation. The Resilience Tour gave attendees a hands-on look at Tybee’s response to natural hazard vulnerabilities, resiliency enhancements, and challenges that remain. The tour covered the entire island, from the beaches to the marshes, and featured bus stops for guests to get out into the field and examine the initiatives up close, explore how everything is connected, and seek answers to questions. Pre-meeting events ended with a Monday Night Rendezvous at the Starland Yard Food Truck Park in Downtown Savannah.



Figure 4. Pairs of established Community Partners and Practitioners came together in a panel discussion moderated by Keynote Speaker, Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley, to find solutions together to ensure equitable resilience in our communities.

Day 1. The SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting officially kicked off with welcoming remarks from Savannah’s Mayor Van Johnson. The Keynote Speaker was civil rights/environmental justice champion, Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley of Atlanta, Georgia. At the age of 81, Reverend Durley spoke with wisdom and enthusiasm at the intersection of climate action and environmental justice. We are especially grateful to the Savannah Riverkeeper and the Center for Sustainable Communities / National Environmental Justice Institute’s "Building a Weather Ready Nation for All" initiative for pooling funds to help SCDRP offer invitational travel and an honorarium to Reverend Durley. Reverend Durley inspired and challenged attendees on both a professional and human level, ending his keynote address with the uplifting mantra “If I can, you can!”, eliciting an enthusiastic standing ovation.

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. After lunch, attendees enjoyed a dynamite double-session block featuring four sets of Community Partners/neighborhood residents and Practitioners. The Community Partners

and Practitioners had previously established, trusted working relationships with each other and were able to share stories and lessons learned from their communities. The first set of Community Partner-Practitioner pairs from Georgia focused on the pros/cons of community engagement models they have tried, equitable access to resources and funding, lessons learned, and how to challenge each other to do better in the future. The second set of Community Partners-Practitioner pairs from South Carolina tackled equity issues related to access to data, technical assistance, and capacity-building programs. Next, attendees participated in a “super collider” long break designed to initiate conversations that “move the needle” towards equitable resilience in our communities. The final panel of Day 1 brought together the previous eight guest speakers in a “larger-than-life” panel led by the “larger-than-life” Moderator, Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley. Reverend Durley led a robust discussion aimed at finding solutions to challenges and charting paths forward. Day 1 ended with the annual in-person SCDRP Full Partnership Business Meeting. During the evening, teams of attendees competed in the “Resilient Sites Scavenger Hunt” which highlighted resilience efforts and historic sites around Savannah.

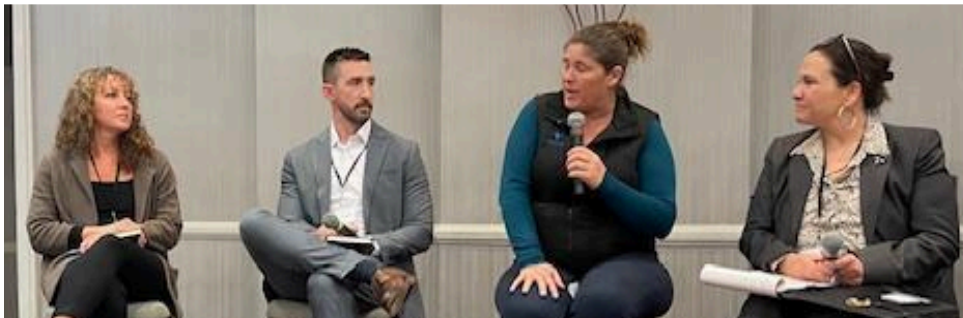


Figure 5. Panelists discuss various financing and funding strategies and how these strategies can be better utilized to “move the needle” toward equitable community resilience to natural hazards.

Day 2. The second day of the SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting began with two concurrent interactive events: a walking tour of Chatham Emergency Operations Center and the Partnership’s first Data Tools and Technology Exhibition. During the Exhibition, attendees met 10 sets of Exhibitors and were provided with introductory exposure to cutting-edge data tools and technologies useful in resilience and climate-adaptation efforts and decision-making. Following these events, the morning sessions explored evaluating the success of Nature-based Solutions, followed by presentations on varied initiatives in USVI, Georgia, and South Florida that support community resilience. The final two sessions of the day, and of the meeting, dug deep into the interconnectivity of resilience funding, finance, hazard insurance, and disaster risk management. In between this final double-session block, another “super collider” break encouraged attendees to get to know the panelists, build connections, and forge further collaborations to really “move the needle” on these timely topics. In particular, the last panel sought to connect the dots between finance and hazard insurance and explore new innovations in both.

Key Takeaways and Calls to Action. In line with the theme of the SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting, there were some areas of discussion that pushed “the needle toward equitable community resilience to natural hazards.” Some of the key takeaways and calls to action that were identified to “move the needle” in 2024 are outlined below:

- Recognize the critical value of ground-up action and initiatives, especially actions originating directly from community-based organizations, local nonprofits, and community residents themselves
- Creatively define regional governance and build regional governance frameworks with “teeth”

- Address affordable housing and workforce housing
- Revise antiquated permitting processes to enable equitable climate adaptation approaches
- Provide grant-writing assistance to the under-resourced
- Tackle hazard insurance from both the public and private sector sides
- “Connect the dots” between climate-related issues for public officials and for the public
 - Emphasize environmental education
 - Elevate science communication
- “Push the needle” on climate migration and buy-out programs
- Gain “needle-pushing power” from the younger generations by supporting professional development and capacity-building programs including internships, mentorships, fellowships, and apprenticeships
- Use the power that you have, at whatever level it may be, to equitably share and shift the power
 - Work within your institution or company to reduce indirect costs, so that more funding for resilience can flow directly to communities
 - Ensure that communities are co-owners of data, because data is power
 - Activate the “6-degrees of separation” rule to use your connections to reach those with more power

Together, the Southeast and Caribbean face the frontlines of climate change and accelerating and intensifying natural disasters. Continual calls to action identified to further “move the needle” in 2024 include:

- Keep these connections all year long
- Forge new collaborations
- Build bridges across professional disciplines, geographic divides, and cultural and intrinsic understandings

Post-Meeting Events. A number of SCDRP 8th Annual Meeting attendees participated in a post-meeting roundtable discussion hosted by the Duke University Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment & Sustainability entitled “Insurance, Innovation & Climate Change.” The Duke Roundtable brought together the diverse perspectives and insights of 37 leading resilience, hazard mitigation, and insurance professionals, who discussed how to quantify and incorporate the increased risks of climate change and explored innovations in the insurance industry.



Figure 6. Leading resilience, hazard mitigation, and insurance professionals gathered during the post-meeting Duke Roundtable entitled "Insurance, Innovation & Climate Change."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SCDRP extends deep gratitude to the 43 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 24 members of the Steering Committee 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 8th ANNUAL MEETING 2024 STEERING COMMITTEE:

- Kathie Dello, NOAA Carolinas Climate Adaptation Partnership and North Carolina State Climate Office (Raleigh, NC)
- Kasen Wally, NC Division of Coastal Management (Morehead City, NC)
- Jason Fleming, Seahorse Consulting (Morehead City, NC)
- Vamsi Krishna Sridharan, Tetra Tech (Fairfax, VA, via New Jersey)
- Kyla Breland, NOAA Disaster Preparedness Program (Charleston, SC)
- Lindy Betzhold, NOAA Office of Coastal Management (Charleston, SC)
- Alex Butler, South Carolina Office of Resilience (Columbia, SC)
- David Johnston, Hamilton Consulting LLC (Charleston, SC)
- Megan Shaw, SECOORA (Charleston, SC, via Ohio)
- Tiffany Troxler, Florida International University (Miami, FL)
- Naomi Braff, Nassau County, Florida (Yulee, FL)
- Donya Frank-Gilchrist, USGS, St Petersburg Coastal and Marine Science Center (St. Petersburg, FL)
- Ivan Baez Santiago, Genera PR (San Juan, Puerto Rico)
- Yasmín Detrés, ROP Data Sharing Initiative, CARICOOS (Puerto Rico)
- Jennifer Kline, Georgia Dept of Natural Resources (Brunswick, GA)
- Michelle Covi, Georgia Extension and Georgia Sea Grant (Athens, GA)
- Jon Philipsborn, Atlanta Regional Commission (Atlanta, GA)
- Garry Harris, Center for Sustainable Communities (Atlanta, GA)
- Randall Mathews, Chatham Emergency, Management (Savannah, GA)
- Kait Morano, Georgia Tech CEAR Hub (Savannah, GA)
- Brittany Dodge, Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve (Sapelo Island, GA)
- Tonya Bonitatibus, Savannah Riverkeeper (Savannah, GA)
- Jenifer Hilburn, One Hundred Miles (Savannah, GA)
- Jeff Morris, Moffatt & Nichol (Savannah, GA)

ANNUAL MEETING SPONSORSHIPS

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 8 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.

Figure 7. Exhibitors explaining their digital platforms and tools, while attendees visit their exhibits during the Data Tools and Technology Exhibition.



**SCDRP 8th ANNUAL MEETING 2024
SPONSORS:**

- Florida International University (FIU) Extreme Events Institute and Institute of Environment (Gold Sponsors)
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SCDRP 8th ANNUAL MEETING 2024 FIELD TRIP SPONSOR:

- AWR Strategic Consulting

SCDRP 8th ANNUAL MEETING 2024 KEYNOTE SPEAKER SPONSORS:

- Center for Sustainable Communities
- National Environmental Justice Institute
- Savannah Riverkeeper

SCDRP 8th ANNUAL MEETING 2024 GRAPHIC RECORDER SPONSOR:

- Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve

Graphic Recorder InkyBrittany created [custom illustrations](#) to summarize the highlights and key takeaways from each session at the 8th Annual Meeting.

SCDRP 8th ANNUAL MEETING 2024 REGISTRATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS:

- Susannah Tuttle, NC Council of Churches Eco-Justice Connection (EJC)
- Uchenna Osia, North Carolina State University
- Michelle Reckner, Georgia Institute of Technology
- Yui Omori, North Carolina State University
- Lady Lee Volmar Claudio, Savannah State University
- Knellee Bislam, AHAM Education Inc,
- Kayla Gilligan, North Carolina State University
- Cameron Goetgeluck, Emory Rollins School of Public Health

MEETING MATERIALS:

- [SCDRP 8th ANNUAL MEETING 2024 Agenda](#)
- [SCDRP 8th ANNUAL MEETING 2024 Full Meeting Program Download](#)

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE SCDRP 8TH ANNUAL MEETING:

- [Gallery of Photos](#)

RECORDINGS OF MEETING SESSIONS:

- [Opening Remarks and Keynote](#)
- Session 1: [Resilience Updates from the States and Territories](#)
- Session 2: [Regional Resilience](#)
- Session 3, Part 1: [Effective Community Engagement & Equitable Access to Resources and Funding](#)
- Session 3, Part 2: [Equitable Access to Data & Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building Programs](#)
- [Full Partnership Business Meeting](#)
- [Data Tools and Technology Exhibition](#)
- Session 5: [Nature-Based Solutions: Evaluations of Success](#)
- Session 6: [Initiatives that Support Community Resilience](#)
- Session 7: [Financing and Funding for Resilience](#)
- Session 8: [Resiliency in a Changing Risk Landscape](#)
- [Closing Remarks \(including Key Takeaways\)](#)

SCDRP 2023-24 ADVISORY BOARD:

- Chair: Lindy Betzhold (NOAA Office of Coastal Management)
- Vice-Chair: Jon Philipsborn (Atlanta Regional Commission)
- North Carolina Seat: Amanda Martin (North Carolina Department of Public Safety)
- South Carolina Seat: Amanda Guthrie (South Carolina Sea Grant)

- Georgia Seat: Kait Morano (Coastal Equity and Resilience (CEAR) Hub, Georgia Tech)
- Florida Seat: Duane De Freese (Indian River Lagoon Council),
- 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: Ashley Ward (Duke University Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment & Sustainability)
- Academic Institution Seat: Rick 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: Kyla Breland (NOAA Disaster Preparedness Program)