

# AUTUMN NEWSLETTER



HUDSON RIVER  
ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY

Autumn 2023

## NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear HRES Members:

Welcome to our Autumn 2023 Newsletter. Thank you, Heather Gierloff, for your generous time to interview with HRES in this issue. On a personal note, I want to thank the members of the HRES Executive Committee and Board for keeping the Society on course while I was not available.

In 2024, we are looking forward to:

- Celebrating the accomplishments of three Hudson Valley professionals at our Annual Awards Dinner on January 25, 2024.
- Awarding McKeon Student Research Grants for proposals submitted by Hudson Valley High School and Undergraduate students. and
- Presenting a symposium covering an important topic for Hudson Valley Citizens.

Wishing you and your families a happy holiday season and a Happy 2024. Thank you for your continuing support.

Jim Morrison  
HRES President

## HRES ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

**January 25, 2024 6:30-9:30PM**  
**Mahoney's Irish Pub & Steakhouse**

The Hudson River Environmental Society will be honoring the following three dedicated professionals for their commitment to better understand and protect the natural environments of the Hudson River and watershed.

**Outstanding Environmental Researcher Award** – Wes Eakin, Cornell University, NYSDEC

Wes Eakin has devoted his career to studying the vital ecosystems of the Hudson River, with a particular focus on river herring and American shad populations. His dedication to environmental research and conservation has yielded significant contributions that have had a profound impact on the preservation and understanding of these critical species. Mr. Eakin's two recent scientific publications in *Marine and Coastal Fisheries* explore the ecological intricacies of the herring of the Hudson River expanding our knowledge and aiding the development of conservation strategies for their long-term management.

**Outstanding Practitioner Award** – Daniel Miller, Hudson River Estuary Program, NYSDEC

For more than 20 years, Dan has been dedicated to restoring Hudson River estuary habitats that have been severely impacted by industrial development, transportation systems, navigational improvements, and a host of local landscape issues. In 2011 he completed the “Hudson River Estuary Program Habitat Restoration Plan,” published by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, identified several priority habitats vital to the health and resiliency of the estuary and presented recommendations for action. Miller now collaborates with a variety of partners to facilitate the plan's implementation, coordinating funding sources with research and science capacities, and moving projects from preliminary stages to design and then eventually to construction.

**HRES Membership:** Our 2024 Membership period for renewals and new members will start in January. There will be two ways to sign up:

Through our link on EventBrite: (credit card required):

[https://hres\\_2023\\_membership.eventbrite.com/](https://hres_2023_membership.eventbrite.com/)

or print out the application online at [www.hres.org](http://www.hres.org) and mail with your check to: HRES, PO Box 279, Marlboro, New York 12542.



## INTERVIEW WITH HEATHER GIERLOFF



**Heather Gierloff** is the Hudson River Programs Supervisor and Estuary Coordinator at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). She supervises and coordinates Hudson River Estuary Management with four DEC Hudson focused programs (Marine Habitat, Marine Fisheries, Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve, and Hudson River Estuary Program), Hudson River Estuary Management Advisory Council, and partners. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Forest Biology and Resource Management from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Since joining DEC in January of 2002 she has held a variety of positions including Forest Ranger, Biologist (Ecology) with the Bureau of Ecosystem Health, Biologist (Marine) with the Bureau of Marine Habitat, Manager of Marine Habitat (Region 3 & Region 4) and Manager Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve. Heather values building meaningful relationships with partners and stakeholders to protect, preserve, restore, and enhance the Hudson River Estuary and watershed. When not working on key Hudson River issues, you can find her spending time with family, cheering on the side lines of an athletic field, gardening, crafting, or hiking.

**HRES: What made you want to pursue a career protecting New York's natural resources?**

**Heather:** I was lucky as a kid to have opportunities to connect to nature and I fell in love with the outdoors and science. So, I knew in high school that environmental science would be my first choice as a career. But, going from knowing I wanted to do something in the environmental science to protecting natural resources evolved through different jobs. When I come to a situation that I am not sure of, I get clarity by making a choice that I think honors and protects the resource to the best of my ability. I do that by learning as much as I can about the situation and resource, and I find fulfillment with that process and that has really gotten me to where I am today.

**HRES: Congratulations on your new role as the Hudson River Estuary Coordinator. What is the first big issue you will be addressing?**

**Heather:** Thank you very much. I recognize that this is a really important position, and I am excited to be in it. I look forward to having a part in the management of the Hudson River Estuary. My priority is filling several vacant positions and we are well on our way. Currently all the programs have managers and now I will be focusing on staffing necessary to implement climate resilience initiatives. I am also meeting with DEC divisions, as our work spans multiple regions and divisions, and I want to spend time with them to discuss the current work of all the DEC Hudson River Programs and to assure them we are implementing projects that complement the work they are already doing. In addition, I am focusing on learning more about our partners and where the work of the Hudson River Programs and their work overlaps.

**HRES: As Hudson River Estuary Coordinator, what are the two greatest threats to the natural resources of the Hudson River Estuary that you hope to help find a solution during your tenure?**

**Heather:** Wow that is a big question. I think the biggest threat is climate change and the need for communities to be able to take action to adapt. Unfortunately, a solution to climate change is not likely in my time. But addressing resiliency to climate change and helping communities take adaptive actions will underly everything we do in the future.

The Hudson River estuary will be changing due to climate conditions, so I would like to have the Hudson River programs' work to focus on learning how the conditions are changing and assist communities in adapting. To do this I want to assure that DEC's long-term monitoring programs are supported so they can continue to be the standard of data that others can rely on when learning and planning for the Hudson River estuary. I also recognize adaption will only be possible working



with partners and municipalities. The programs will focus on learning what communities need, and to work to create the tools communities need to implement resilience actions locally.

Communities not having the ability to adapt is a real threat. We need to assure that all communities including tribes that have been relocated out of the Hudson River estuary, are engaged in the management and protection of the Hudson River estuary. To do that, our programs will continue to focus on reaching out to communities, share the value of the Hudson River with all audiences, support young adults professionally, and continue to build relationships with tribes so that everyone knows more about the Hudson River estuary and that these communities are a vital part of the future of the Hudson River estuary.

**HRES: Responsibility for coordination and management of the Hudson River Estuary Program has been split into two positions. How do you see this new structure helping DEC address some of the estuary's most pressing issues?**

**Heather:** With the new organization of positions, I am supervising the management of the four programs that focus on the Hudson River estuary including Marine Habitat, Marine Fisheries, the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve (HRNERR), and the Hudson River Estuary Program. The new organization will enhance my ability to work collaboratively among our programs and with partners. I can take the information from the staff of all four programs, HREMAC, municipalities and partners to better understand the issues and opportunities. I then want to work with DEC, state agencies, federal partners, and NOAA coastal partners to find strategic ways to connect opportunities to the issues. That process takes time and strong relationships, and I am looking forward to doing that work.

**HRES: What advice do you have for students wishing to pursue a career in natural resource science and management?**

**Heather:** My biggest advice would be to take opportunities when they come up. I did not take a straight path to this position. I have learned about construction through landscaping, communicating with a wide variety of audiences as an outdoor educator, implementing regulations as a Forest Ranger in law enforcement, assessing marine habitat impacts through my previous regulatory role, and most recently as the HRNERR manager, how to work on coastal issues with NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve system. All the roles that I have had provided me a rich set of experiences that make up the fabric of who I am today. I never know when an experience will help me in my decision-making, but I'm so thankful to have a lot to draw on.

**“I think the biggest threat is climate change and the need for communities to be able to take action to adapt. Unfortunately, a solution to climate change is not likely in my time. But addressing resiliency to climate change and helping communities take adaptive actions will underly everything we do in the future.” – Heather Gierloff**

## HRES SPRING 2023 SYMPOSIUM: A PHOTO GALLERY

### HRES Executive Committee

*Jim Morrison (President)*  
*Chuck Nieder (Vice President)*  
*David S. Davis (Treasurer)*  
*Lucy Johnson (Secretary)*  
*Emilie Hauser (Ex Officio)*

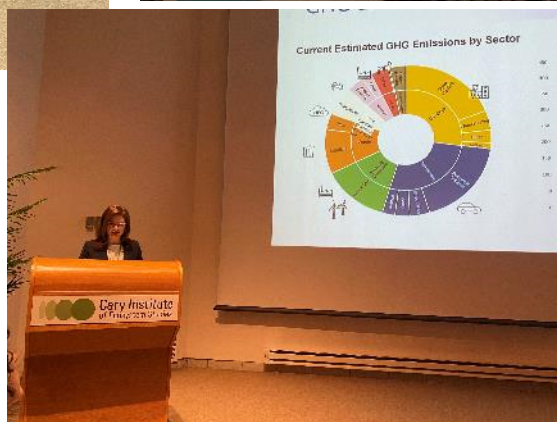
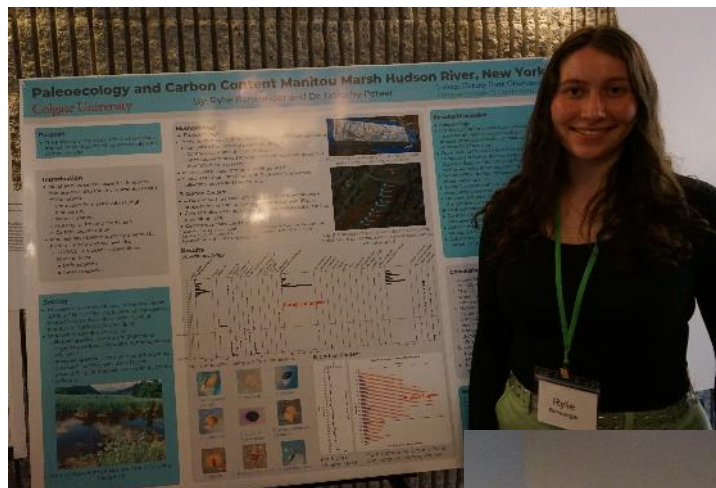
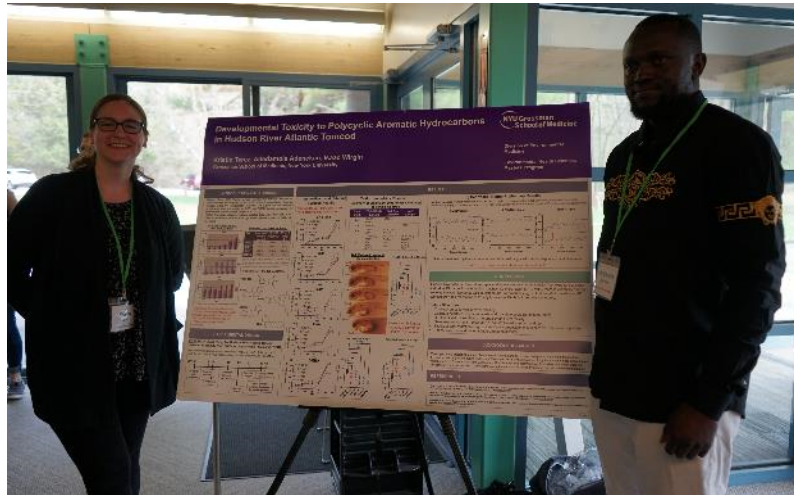
### HRES Board Members

*Bernadette Connors, Ph.D.*  
*Chris DeRoberts*  
*William Dey*  
*Zion Klos, Ph.D.*  
*Karin Limburg, Ph.D.*  
*Mark McLean*  
*Margie Turrin*  
*David Yozzo, Ph.D.*

Here's a few photos from our April 2023 Spring symposium– Landscape Tradeoffs as New York Transitions to Renewable Energy – which addressed issues of concern to scientists, resource managers, municipalities, and the general public throughout the Hudson Valley and other regions of the state.

We look forward to seeing you in April 2024 for our next scientific symposium. Stay tuned for more details to come.

Additional information about HRES's previous and upcoming symposiums can be found on our website [www.hres.org](http://www.hres.org).



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*Founded in 1970, the Hudson River Environmental Society is a nonprofit, non-advocacy organization that delivers the science behind Hudson Valley issues to citizens, scientists, and decision makers. We enable objective discussions, provide forums for rigorous science, connect disparate views, and showcase the region's natural heritage. We are academic researchers, government officials, nonprofit scientists, private consultants, teachers, students, and interested residents who find real solutions.*