

## **Bridging the Gap: Integrating Nature-Based Solutions Across the Wetland Management Spectrum**

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### **Panelists:**

- Andy Robertson, GeoSpatial Services
- Karen Menetrey, Rio Grande Return
- Mark Biddle, Maryland Environmental Service
- Katie Morgan, Partner Engineering

### **Session Type:** Panel Discussion with Audience Participation

The increasing complexity of water resource management, driven by climate change, habitat loss, and intensified development, demands resilient and multi-benefit solutions. Nature-Based Solutions (NBS), such as living shorelines, wetland restoration, and riparian buffer expansion, offer ecologically sound alternatives to traditional gray infrastructure, providing enhanced flood protection, improved water quality, and critical wildlife habitat.

This panel discussion brings together a diverse group of experts representing the full lifecycle of NBS projects: from initial geospatial analysis to on-the-ground implementation, regulatory compliance, and successful planning design. The goal of the session is to move beyond the theoretical benefits of NBS and address the practical challenges and opportunities inherent in scaling these solutions.

### **Key Discussion Points Include:**

1. **High-Resolution Geospatial Planning:** Andy Robertson will discuss leveraging advanced remote sensing and data analytics to identify optimal sites for NBS implementation and quantify ecosystem service performance.
2. **On-the-Ground Restoration and Community Engagement:** Karen Menetrey will share lessons from non-profit work, focusing on successful large-scale restoration projects in New Mexico and strategies for ramping up implementation and involving local communities as vital project partners.
3. **Policy, Permitting, and Regulatory Hurdles:** Mark Biddle will provide the state perspective from Maryland and Delaware, detailing how government agencies are integrating NBS into comprehensive plans, regulatory frameworks, navigating permitting complexities, and securing public funding.

4. **Planning and Development for Ecological Success:** Katie Morgan will address the most effective ways to incorporate NBS for restoring, managing, and protecting wetlands during commercial real estate development projects for sustainable ecological outcomes.

The session will be highly interactive, dedicating significant time to audience Q&A and collaborative discussion. Attendees are encouraged to bring their most challenging project questions related to NBS design, financing, and regulatory approval. This panel aims to foster an interdisciplinary exchange, providing wetland managers, engineers, regulators, and consultants with actionable strategies to accelerate the adoption and implementation of resilient, nature-based infrastructure nationwide.