

# CLIMATE ADAPTATION FORUM

*Environmental Business Council of New England, Inc.  
Sustainable Solutions Lab at the University of Massachusetts Boston*

## **Crisis as Catalyst: Meeting the Moment with Transformational Investments**

Thursday, November 30, 2023

*Hosted by:*

**Nutter, McClennen & Fish LLP**

Louis D. Brandeis Conference Center  
155 Seaport Boulevard, Boston MA 02210

**and**

Streaming virtually on Zoom



EBC & Sustainable Solutions Lab at UMass Boston – Quarterly Climate Adaptation Forum

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[www.climateadaptationforum.org](http://www.climateadaptationforum.org)

## AGENDA

- 8:30 a.m. Registration & Networking**
- 9:00 a.m. Welcome**
- Rebecca Herst, Forum Organizer  
Director, Sustainable Solutions Lab, University of Massachusetts Boston
- 9:10 a.m. Program Introduction**
- Julie Wormser, Forum Co-Chair, Senior Policy Advisor  
Mystic River Watershed Association
  - Nasser Brahim, Forum Co-Chair  
Senior Climate Resiliency Specialist, Woods Hole Group
- 9:20 a.m. Hurricane Maria**
- Carmen Yulín Cruz, Former Mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 9:40 a.m. Hurricane Katrina – *Virtual Presentation***
- Andeanecia Morris, Executive Director, HousingNOLA
- 10:00 a.m. Superstorm Sandy – *Virtual Presentation***
- Charles Viemeister, Project Manager – Strategic Planning, Con Edison
- 10:20 a.m. Break**
- 10:45 a.m. Boston Covid Response**
- Christopher Osgood, Senior Advisor, Infrastructure, City of Boston
- 11:05 a.m. Lessons from Quabbin Reservoir’s Legacy**
- Stephen Estes-Smargiassi, Director of Planning and Sustainability  
Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA)
- 11:25 a.m. Moderated Discussion**
- Panel Moderator:** John Valinch, Forum Co-Chair  
Senior Manager of Climate Resilience and Land Use  
GroundworkUSA
- Panelists:**
- Carmen Yulín Cruz, Former Mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico
  - Stephen Estes-Smargiassi, MWRA
  - Christopher Osgood, City of Boston
- 12:00 p.m. Adjourn**

## FORUM CO-CHAIRS

**Nasser Brahim**, Senior Climate Resiliency Specialist  
Woods Hole Group  
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Mr. Brahim is a Senior Climate Resiliency Specialist at Woods Hole Group, an integrated coastal engineering, science, and technology firm. He helps coastal communities build climate resilience through vulnerability assessments, resiliency plans, and design and operational improvements. Mr. Brahim has advised local, State, and non-profit partners on how to integrate climate resiliency considerations in policies and regulations, including Boston, Hingham, Hull, Gloucester, Oak Bluffs, Swampscott, Westport, Massport, and the Conservation Law Foundation. He has also led climate resiliency projects with municipalities, wastewater utilities, non-profit land conservancies, higher education institutions, and real estate property managers. His projects have earned numerous engineering, planning, and design awards and been covered by NPR, The Boston Globe, New York Times, The Washington Post, and PBS NewsHour. Mr. Brahim is the Board Vice-President of the Mystic River Watershed Association and a certified consultant under the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program. He holds a Master of Environmental Management from Yale University and Bachelor of Arts from Florida International University.

**John Valinch**, Senior Manager of Climate Resilience and Land Use  
Groundwork USA  
john@groundworkusa.org

John Valinch (he/they) is Groundwork USA's Senior Manager of Climate Resilience and Land Use. In this role, John leads resident-centered climate resilience intervention strategies through the Climate Safe Massachusetts Partnership, promotes equitable development and environmental justice through the Brownfields Technical Assistance Program and builds capacity across the Groundwork affiliate Trust network to deepen and expand strategic partnerships and advocacy efforts.

John's journey in the environmental justice movement began at the age of 15 when he joined GreenRoots to stop a diesel power plant from being built in his hometown of Chelsea, Massachusetts. He is guided by a principled commitment to justice, equity, and building people-power through stakeholder engagement, public policy, and data-informed strategies.

Before joining Groundwork USA, John worked as an Analyst for UNITE HERE, an international union representing over 270,000 hotel, gaming, airport, and food service employees. Here, John conducted private equity research and led shareholder advocacy efforts to support hotel organizing campaigns. He also co-founded Hospitality Employees Advancement and Training (HEAT), Inc., a joint labor-management culinary training academy in Miami, Florida, which provides hospitality workers the training and skills needed to earn sustainable living wages, benefits, and jobs with dignity in South Florida.

John is also the Co-President of Comunidades Enraizadas ("Rooted Communities") Community Land Trust and serves as a Director on the Board of GreenRoots. He also serves on the Segal Advisory Board, working to build the capacity of the Eli and Phyllis Segal Citizen Leadership Program at Brandeis University. In 2015, John co-founded the Chelsea LGBTQ Coalition, the first interracial, interfaith, and intergenerational LGBTQ network in the City's history.

He has a Master's Degree in Public Policy and a Master of Business Administration from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University. John previously graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Massachusetts Boston in 2014, where he received a B.A. in Political Science with a Minor in Public

Policy. In his spare time, John enjoys spending time with loved ones, outdoor explorations, and building up the power of communities to secure a healthy, equitable, and affirming future for all.

**Julie Wormser**, Senior Policy Advisor  
Mystic River Watershed Association  
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Julie Wormser is the Mystic River Watershed Association's Senior Policy Advisor and founder of the Resilient Mystic Collaborative. Since its launch in September 2018, the RMC has grown to include 20 municipalities and has secured over \$30 million in funding to pursue regional climate preparedness projects. As Executive Director of The Boston Harbor Association, Wormser was instrumental in drawing attention to Boston's need to prepare for coastal flooding from extreme storms and sea level rise. She coauthored *Preparing for the Rising Tide* and *Designing With Water* and co-led the Boston Living with Water international design competition with the City of Boston and Boston Society of Architects. She has a BA in biology from Swarthmore College and an MPA from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

## SPEAKERS

**Carmen Yulín Cruz**, Former Mayor of San Juan  
Puerto Rico  
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Carmen Yulín Cruz is the author of *El Poder está en la Calle* (Power is in the Street). In it, she writes about the struggles and experiences of the people, and how rewarding it can be to find their own power to change society and to change the country. For Carmen Yulín Cruz, the principles of justice and equality are her ultimate passion and commitment in life.

Yulín, as she likes to be called, left San Juan and attended the University of Boston, Massachusetts, graduating Cum Laude in Political Science. Afterwards, she received a full scholarship from the Sloan Foundation to complete her master's degree in public policy at Carnegie Mellon University. There she was the first student to receive the Spirit Award, now known as the Barbara Jenkins Award, an honor bestowed upon the student who elicited a positive impact on the quality of life of other students, in and out of the classroom.

After graduating from Carnegie Mellon, Yulín was hired by Westinghouse to be part of their selective program for the development of managers in human resources. She then worked as the human resources director for the Office of Thrift Supervision in the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

In 1992, she moved back to Puerto Rico where she worked for private companies until she decided to return to the public sector. First, she became an advisor to the then-Mayor of San Juan, Sila María Calderón, and then went on to advise the Speaker of the Puerto Rico House of Representatives, until deciding to run for office.

In 2008 she was elected Representative At-Large for the Puerto Rico House of Representatives. At the end of March 2012, she accepted the nomination to run for Mayor of San Juan. In November 2012, she won the election and became Mayor. In November 2016, she was reelected by an even wider margin. On September 20, 2017, Hurricane María completely devastated Puerto Rico. Mayor Cruz became a strong advocate for getting much needed help and dignified care for the people of Puerto Rico.

Yulín is an active advocate for equality, fighting for the LGBTQ community, the deaf community and children with functional diversity as well as those who have struggled with gender-based violence. She is also a champion for the rights of immigrants.

Her vision of public service is one of governing not for the people, but with the people. She believes a better society is built by having strong student organizations, labor unions, and by implementing programs such as participatory budgets, wherein the people in each community decide how to best develop sustainable plans for themselves.

**Stephen Estes-Smargiassi**, Director of Planning and Sustainability  
Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA)  
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Stephen Estes-Smargiassi is a planner and an engineer, with degrees from MIT and Harvard. For the past 36 years he has lead or participated in all drinking water quality and master planning initiatives at the MWRA, the regional wholesale water and sewer agency for metropolitan Boston.

He has been active in research on water resource issues and climate change for over 30 years, and has worked with the EPA, Army Corps, Congress, NCAR and the Water Research Foundation on this topic. He has led MWRA's efforts to understand the impacts of climate change on its water and wastewater systems, and to adapt to them. His team tracks MWRA's substantial progress in developing green energy resources, improving energy efficiency, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

He lives in Boston where the streets don't follow old cowpaths, although they seem to, and loves maps. And he proudly drinks tap water, at least in Boston.

**Andreanecia Morris**, Executive Director  
HousingNOLA  
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Andreanecia M. Morris serves as Executive Director for HousingNOLA, a 10-year public private partnership working to end New Orleans' affordable housing crisis. The 10-year Strategy and Implementation Plan is a comprehensive and radical strategy guided by data and community input to address systemic inequity issues in housing. Morris has spent her career working to in various parts of the housing system since graduating from Loyola University New Orleans. Morris also holds a MA in Community Development Policy and Practice from the University of New Hampshire Carsey School of Public Policy. After Hurricane Katrina, she implemented programs that created over 500 first time homebuyers, secured \$104.5 million soft second subsidy for Metro New Orleans, and provided supportive services for approximately 5,000 households—homeowners who were struggling to rebuild and renters who required wrap around services.

Morris was lead organizer for the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance (GNOHA) when it started in 2007 and, since its incorporation in 2012, Morris has served as GNOHA's President. GNOHA's advocacy supported members and partners in developing approximately 88,000 housing opportunities between 2006 and 2015 in New Orleans. Now, GNOHA supports efforts to preserve and create affordable housing—placing a special emphasis on the needs of the most vulnerable in society.

Gambit Weekly named Morris New Orleanian of the Year for her role in HousingNOLA's innovative strategy in 2017. In 2021, Consumer Federation of America (CFA) named her one its five Consumer Champions. Most recently, UNH chose to celebrate and spotlight Morris' work doing important sustainability research, curriculum development and teaching, campus initiatives and culture development, and external engagement work across and beyond the university through its 2023 Alumni Sustainability Awards program. Morris also chairs the HousingLOUISIANA Alliance Network; serves on the boards of Propeller, Finance New Orleans, National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC), Energy Wise and Grounded Solutions Network; and is a member of Prosperity Now Policy Advisory Committee and Capital One Community Advisory Committee.

**Christopher Osgood**, Senior Advisor, Infrastructure  
City of Boston  
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Chris Osgood serves as Mayor Michelle Wu's Senior Advisor for Infrastructure. In this role, Chris supports the Administration on advancing cross-cabinet and long-term infrastructure investments so that those investments best deliver for the people of Boston.

Chris first joined the City of Boston team in 2006, serving in a range of roles since then. Those include Mayoral Advisor, Co-Chair of the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, Chief of Streets, and Chief of Staff. Across all of these roles, Chris has enjoyed collaborating with colleagues and constituents to deliver tangible benefits to the public.

A resident of Jamaica Plain, Chris is an alum of City Year, Haverford College and the Harvard Business School.

**Charles Viemeister**, Project Manager – Strategic Planning  
Con Edison  
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Charles Viemeister is currently project manager in the Climate Risk and Resilience Group of Con Edison. He recently was involved in the development of the company's 20-year climate resilience plan filed with the NYS Public Service Commission. He has been involved in addressing climate change impacts on the company's electric, gas and steam systems since 2017. In 2019 he completed the company's first climate vulnerability study which was followed by a climate change implementation plan in 2020. This included establishing a governance structure to address the evolving science around climate change and its effects on the Company's services. Charles has been in the energy field throughout his career and has built on experiences in power plant engineering, construction and operation; energy efficiency services; project and cost management; business development; marketing; and strategic planning.

Charles has a bachelor's in mechanical engineering from NYU Tandon School of Engineering (by way of acquisition– Polytechnic Institute of New York)