

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

Insurance's Role at Climate's Frontlines: Crisis, Innovation, and Community

Friday, March 7, 2025

Hosted by:

Foley Hoag LLP

155 Seaport Boulevard

Boston MA 02210

and

Streaming virtually on Zoom



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

EBC Contact: Ann Gisinger, agisinger@ebcne.org

SSL Contact: Gabriela Boscio Santos, Gabriela.Boscio@umb.edu

www.climateadaptationforum.org

AGENDA

8:30 a.m. Registration & Networking

9:00 a.m. Welcome

- Gabriela Boscio Santos, Forum Organizer
Associate Director, Sustainable Solutions Lab
University of Massachusetts Boston

Welcome from Sponsor

- Indrani Ghosh, PhD., Steering Committee Member, Climate Adaptation Forum
Resiliency Practice Leader, Weston & Sampson

Host Welcome & Program Introduction

- Kathleen Brill, Forum Co-Chair; Partner, Foley Hoag LLP

9:20 a.m. Setting the Stage: The Insurance Market in the Face of Climate Change – Recorded Remarks

- U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, State of Rhode Island

9:30 a.m. Reimagining Insurance Markets That Work for Everybody

- Charlie Sidoti, Executive Director, InnSure

10:00 a.m. Intersections of Insurance and Nature-Based Solutions

- Michael Beck, Director, Center for Coastal Climate Resilience
University of California, Santa Cruz

10:30 a.m. Break

10:50 a.m. Financial Risk Management Challenges and Strategies for the Public Sector

- Benjamin McNeil, VP, Public Sector Solutions, Swiss Re

11:20 a.m. From Theory to Practice: The Flood Recovery Fund

- Theodora Makris, Senior Program Manager, Center for NYC Neighborhoods

11:50 a.m. Moderated Discussion

Panel Moderator: Kyle Johnson, Forum Co-Chair

Regional Lead, Climate Resiliency, Kleinfelder

Panelists:

- Michael Beck, University of California, Santa Cruz
- Theodora Makris, Center for NYC Neighborhoods
- Benjamin McNeil, Swiss Re
- Charlie Sidoti, InnSure

12:30 a.m. Adjourn

FORUM CO-CHAIRS

Kathleen Brill, Partner, Environmental Permitting & Compliance Practice Group
Foley Hoag LLP
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Kathleen Brill is a Partner at Foley Hoag LLP who concentrates her practice on complex environmental and land use matters. Kathleen leverages her experience in the environmental consulting and real estate development fields to assist her clients in acquiring, protecting, and developing properties. On behalf of her clients in the public, private, energy, institutional, and development sectors, she has handled matters related to environmental permitting, regulatory compliance, environmental due diligence, environmental insurance, and government investigations. Kathleen has been recognized by Chambers USA as a leading practitioner of environmental law. Kathleen has helped clients acquire permits at the local, state, and federal levels, and frequently coordinates the efforts of environmental, transportation, architectural, geotechnical, marine and other specialty consultants to ensure cohesive presentations before regulatory authorities. Particular areas of expertise include zoning, wetlands/Chapter 91 licensing, Article 97 protections, Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) compliance, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance, and Clean Air Act permitting and compliance.

Kathleen has a B.A. from Harvard College and a J.D. from Boston College Law School. Kathleen is active in numerous civic and professional organizations, and has held leadership positions with the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (Massachusetts Chapter).

Ellen Douglas, Senior Resiliency Project Manager
AECOM
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Dr. Ellen Douglas is a hydrologist and engineer with broad expertise in the analysis of water-related issues. Ellen was a professor in the School for the Environment at UMass Boston for 17 years, researching the impacts of climate change on coastal and inland communities across New England before joining the AECOM team in August 2023. Her role at AECOM includes managing projects related to climate resilient infrastructure. She has authored or co-authored over 50 peer-reviewed publications, book chapters, and technical reports. She was a contributing author for the 2013 U.S. National Climate Assessment and the IPCC Fifth and Sixth Assessment Reports. Ellen spent nine months as a Fulbright Fellow in Australia (2013-14) working with the CSIRO on the Water Values and Benefits project.

Kyle Johnson, Regional Lead, Climate Resiliency
Kleinfelder
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Kyle is the Regional Lead for Kleinfelder's climate resiliency practice group in New England, based out of Boston, MA. Mr. Johnson is a technical expert in climate change vulnerability and adaptation planning, climate-resilient infrastructure design, coastal storm hardening, living shorelines and other nature-based solutions. He leads a dedicated group of technical professionals tackling of water and transportation resiliency projects that address inland and coastal flooding, sea level rise, and extreme heat hazards. Mr. Johnson has played a lead role on several regional projects addressing flood mitigation, mobility, and equity-based planning, including 'resilient routes' network and prioritization analyses for rural and coastal regions in multiple states.

SPEAKERS

Michael Beck, Director, Center for Coastal Climate Resilience
University of California, Santa Cruz
Long Marine Lab Ocean Health Building, COH 210, 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, Ca 95064
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Professor Michael W. Beck is the Director of the Center on Coastal Climate Resilience and AXA Chair in Coastal Resilience at the University of California Santa Cruz and Co-Lead of the NSF CoPe *Strong Coasts* project. Mike aims to reduce risks to people, property, and nature in his work across science, policy, and practice. Mike served for 20 years as Lead Marine Scientist at The Nature Conservancy. He has advised government agencies in the US, Germany, UK, EU, Philippines, Jamaica, and Grenada, among others. He has collaborated with many global agencies and companies including AXA, Munich Re, Swiss Re, Lloyd's of London, Risk Management Solutions, and the World Bank. Mike has authored more than 100 peer-reviewed scientific papers and numerous Op-eds in major papers including the [LA Times](#), NY Times, The Hill, and the Miami Herald. He has been a Fulbright Fellow and a Pew Marine Fellow. You can find more on his lab's work at <https://coastalresilience.ucsc.edu/>.

Theodora Makris, Senior Program Manager
Center for NYC Neighborhoods
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Theodora Makris is a senior program manager at the Center for NYC Neighborhoods. She currently manages the development of the Flood Recovery Fund, an emergency grants pilot program that supports homeowners affected by severe rainfall flooding. The program, which utilizes a parametric insurance product and a community-based model, can serve as a framework for other municipalities that are considering harnessing innovative insurance-like products to address growing climate risks. Makris hopes that the program's outcomes will build awareness around the need for substantial industry changes--changes that will prioritize the specific needs of low and moderate-income families and improve coverage gaps in flood-prone communities.

Benjamin McNeil, VP, Public Sector Solutions
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Ben McNeil has spent his career focusing on public sector disaster resilience and risk management. He currently works for Swiss Re's Public Sector Solutions team helping municipalities in North America define, develop and manage their risk transfer strategies. Previously, he worked for the City of Boston for nine years, serving most recently as the City's Risk Finance Manager. Ben received an MBA from Boston University's Questrom School of Business, and also holds an MS in Disaster Resilience from Tulane University in New Orleans, LA and a BA from Occidental College in Los Angeles, CA. Ben also serves as a Petty Officer Second Class the US Coast Guard Reserves out of Station Boston.

Charlie Sidoti, Executive Director
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Charlie Sidoti is the Executive Director of InnSure, a nonprofit innovation hub catalyzing novel insurance solutions that address climate change risk. He's worked in the insurance industry for over 35 years, and his experience includes senior leadership roles with P&C insurance carriers and 10-years leading insurance-adjacent, analytics-focused startups. Charlie is driven to reimagine how the insurance sector can better help society solve

the most difficult climate risk challenges via better insurance products and services. Charlie holds a BS in Marine Engineering from Massachusetts Maritime Academy and an MBA in Business Administration from Boston College.

U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse

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Sheldon Whitehouse represents Rhode Island in the United States Senate, where he is fighting to position America as a leader in the clean energy economy and protect the Ocean State from the consequences of climate change. As Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee and a senior member of the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee, Whitehouse takes on the fossil fuel industry and spearheads policies combatting the climate crisis and strengthening environmental protections.

In addition to Budget and EPW, Whitehouse is a member of the Finance and Judiciary Committees.

A graduate of Yale University and the University of Virginia School of Law, Whitehouse served as Rhode Island's U.S. Attorney and state Attorney General before being elected to the United States Senate in 2006. He and his wife Sandra, a marine biologist and environmental advocate, live in Newport. They have two grown children.