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2024 RESILIENT SOLUTIONS SUMMIT

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Building Resilience

Speaker Bios

Kelly Penton Chacon is a skilled public affairs and communications professional with more than 20 years of experience in both the public and private sectors. At Carnival Cruise Line, she leads community engagement and public affairs in Carnival's 14 U.S. homeport cities, while supporting government relations efforts nationally and across the cruise line's destinations.

Prior to joining Carnival Cruise Line, Kelly served as senior director for the Miami office of a national public affairs firm, managing the team and leading accounts focused on public service, economic development, land use, real estate development, and public-private partnerships. Successful campaigns she worked on include the promotion of Miami's flourishing Wynwood neighborhood, the passage of a public referendum to increase teacher pay and fund security officers at Miami Dade County Public Schools, the redevelopment of Miami Beach's North Beach area, and numerous city/county approvals for the construction of major retail and mixed-use projects in the South Florida area. Kelly also worked as director of communications for the City of Miami and press secretary for City of Miami Mayor Manny Diaz.

Kelly grew up in Miami, attended Florida State University where she obtained a bachelor's degree in communications, and obtained a Master of Business Administration from Florida International University.



Kelly Penton Chacon
Senior Director
Public & Executive Communications
Carnival Cruise Line

MODERATOR

Building Resilience

Speaker Bios

Jason Bird, CFM is the Americas East Resilience Solutions Lead at Jacobs. Mr. Bird utilizes his 24 years of experience to help communities reduce risk and improve their resilience to severe weather and climate threats. His experience ranges from developing climate scenarios, evaluating vulnerabilities and risk, and identifying adaptation strategies to protect critical infrastructure for coastal and inland communities, including buildings, utilities, stormwater management and transportation systems/facilities.

As the former United Nations ARISE US Network Chair, Mr. Bird has been involved in development of tools to evaluate and promote disaster risk reduction through collaboration between public and private organizations, to enhance broader system performance and build community and military installation resilience.



Jason Bird
Americas East Resilience
Solutions Lead
Jacobs

Building Resilience

Speaker Bios

Raised on frequent nature-hiking (and sledding!) experiences in the Indian Boundary Prairies and county forest preserves in Northern Illinois, Retired Army Engineer Colonel Jason Kirk has been interested in our environment and resilient infrastructure solutions since his youngest days. Jason serves as Black & Veatch's Federal Solutions Director and Resilience Programs Liaison. He is charged with growing project and program delivery for Federal clients in all facets of resilient infrastructure – including USACE civil works and military installation resilient energy, decarbonization and environmental solutions.

Prior to joining the BV team, Jason spent four years in the private-sector A/E/C industry and more than 25 years serving in the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). His last military duty was serving as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Jacksonville District Commander, where for 37 months he led an 850-person team executing a \$500M-annual full-service engineering program. His team's accomplishments included emergency response and recovery following hurricanes Maria in Puerto Rico and Irma in Florida and execution of the world's largest aquatic ecosystem restoration project with the federal-state Everglades Restoration.

Jason's federal water resource-specific project experience includes the multiple Everglades Restoration components, the Herbert Hoover Dike (Lake Okeechobee, Florida) Rehabilitation, multiple Puerto Rico flood-protection projects, the Lakes Marion and Moultrie South Carolina Water Infrastructure program and serving as senior project manager for the Louisiana Coastal Area restoration plan.



Jason Kirk
Vice President
Federal Solutions Director and
Resilience Programs Liaison
Black & Veatch

Building Resilience

Speaker Bios

Carmen Olazábal is the Director of Sustainability and Resilience at EXP. For over 20 years, she has been a committed sustainability professional leading in the engineering and project management field for both the public and private sector.

Throughout her career, Ms. Olazábal has managed cross-functional teams of technical personnel, government policy makers and a wide range of stakeholders to advance discussions into a cohesive and comprehensive strategy. She successfully executed a range of sustainable public sector initiatives that required extensive outreach to build up public support. Ms. Olazábal's practical experience, results-oriented personality and depth of technical understanding makes her a valuable collaborator for challenging projects.

In addition to her work experience, she also has actively participated in industry events and volunteered in working groups including: Southeast Regional Compact for Climate Change, 305 Resilient Working Groups, WASD Resilient Coalition and Coral Gables Sustainability Board



Carmen Olazabal
Director
Sustainability & Resilience
EXP

Building Resilience

Speaker Bios

Lauren Sher is senior director of development for decarbonization at Florida Power & Light Company (FPL), a subsidiary of NextEra Energy, Inc. and the largest investor-owned electric utility in the nation. Since October 2022, she has led FPL's decarbonization journey to bring FPL customers long-term cost certainty, make Florida more energy independent and save billions of dollars in fuel to generate electricity. She serves as the intermediary across the company to coordinate all efforts to work toward the objective of eliminating carbon emissions from operations by no later than 2045.

Lauren previously held the position of director of environmental policy and sustainability for NextEra Energy, leading the policy team for all environmental and natural resources policy in state capitols and the federal government. She also served as a director for federal government affairs in Washington, D.C., where she represented NextEra Energy on tax policy and climate legislation and regulations.

Before joining NextEra Energy in 2015, Lauren worked in the United States Senate for seven years. Her roles included energy and environment advisor to former Florida Sen. Bill Nelson and professional staff member on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.



Lauren Sher
Senior Director, Development
Florida Power & Light Company

Building Resilience

Speaker Bios

Mr. Whitfield has over 20 years of professional experience designing infrastructure solutions for a variety of public sector clients at the City, County, and State level. His recent signature project included developing a detailed study of the effects of sea level rise on flooding in central Miami-Dade County for the South Florida Water Management District. As a community-oriented, life-long resident of Florida, Mr. Whitfield works with a variety of community organizations and boards and maintains leadership roles in several professional societies.

Mr. Whitfield holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Florida. He is married to his wife of 20 years and they have two daughters, a teenager and a toddler, that keep him busy on nights and weekends.



Brent Whitfield
Director of Water Resources
Chen Moore & Associates

Building Communities for Tomorrow

Speaker Bios

Dr. Lynette Cardoch is Moffatt & Nichol's Director of Resilience & Adaptation, leading collaborative efforts to deliver comprehensive resiliency solutions & adaptation services in the coastal zone. Remit covers three practices: Ports, Water, and Transportation. Services range from coastal planning (e.g., decision economics and strategic consulting) to engineering of nature-based (e.g., wetlands and beaches) and built infrastructure (e.g. maritime structures).

She is a coastal ecologist with over 20 years of experience in regulatory and water policies, coastal restoration, and urban and coastal resiliency. With her technical qualifications and collaborative management style, her assignments include steering interdisciplinary teams of engineers, scientists, and regulators. She has also worked closely with coastal utilities and natural resource agencies on integrated planning and operationalizing resiliency, particularly for coastal protection, storm surge, and interior flooding.



Dr. Lynette Cardoch Director
Resilience & Adaptation
Moffatt & Nichol

MODERATOR

Building Communities for Tomorrow

Speaker Bios

Mr. Ballina has more than 25 years of experience in the administration of institutional grade multifamily properties, U.S. HUD Housing operations and economic development programs. Throughout his career, he has administered over \$3.5 billion in assets and managed programs for over 45,000 multi-family units and 80,000 residents throughout the United States.

Prior to joining PHCD, Alex straddled the private and public sectors, with executive positions including Director of Asset Management for the Miami-Dade Public Housing and Community Development Department (PHCD), City of Miami Beach Housing & Community Development Department, RESIA and Prudential Real Estate Services.



Alex Ballina
Director of Public Housing &
Community Development
Miami-Dade County

Building Communities for Tomorrow

Speaker Bios

Ken is the President of Renco, USA, Inc., a composite manufacturing and building industry start-up and affiliate of the Coastal Construction Group. He has spearheaded the research and development of the Renco Structural Building System in the United States and has codified and secured Renco's approvals under the International Building Code (IBC).

Having secured US patents and all necessary approvals to build mineral composite fiber reinforced structures under the IBC, Renco is embarking on a campaign to launch the marketing, sale, and implementation of its structural building products throughout the United States. Ken is also an accomplished builder and real estate developer, successfully completing over \$5 billion dollars of development and construction projects.

He has over 35 years of development, design, financing, construction management and sales and marketing experience on a wide variety of mixed-use, multi-family, hospitality, retail, commercial office, health care and industrial projects. Starting his career as a nuclear construction engineer, he moved to commercial building where he quickly advanced as a project manager and then as an executive, providing corporate vision, strategy, leadership and guidance for several prominent New York, Philadelphia and Miami based construction managers and real estate developers.



Ken Smuts
President
Renco USA

Building Communities for Tomorrow

Speaker Bios

Nikisha Williams, a Miami-native, currently serves as the Managing Director of Collective Impact at The Miami Foundation. In this role she is responsible for leading large-scale change through cross-sector collaboration by bringing together government, philanthropy, nonprofits, and corporations together to solve major community challenges in bold ways that couldn't be accomplished without collective action.

Nikisha's career spans the public sector and communications, where she most recently served as Chief Operating Officer of the Opa-locka Community Development Corporation, where she was responsible for leading the operations of the organization, including human resources, marketing, fund development, as it expanded its placemaking, workforce development, health and arts/culture initiatives in the community.

She graduated from the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Science in broadcast journalism and a Bachelor of Art in Spanish. During her studies she spent time in Barcelona, Spain learning the Spanish language and about the culture.



Nikisha Williams Managing Director
of Collective Impact
The Miami Foundation

Property Insurance & Emergency Management

Speaker Bios

Dr. Todd A. Crowl is an ecologist with more than 30 years of experience working on interdisciplinary projects related to ecosystems science and aquatic ecology.

He has been a Senior Scientist in the Luquillo LTER Program located in Puerto Rico since 1994. The LUQ LTER is part of a national network of sites designed to understand long-term dynamics of important global ecosystems. From 2009-2011, he directed the Long-Term Ecological Research Program (LTER) for the National Science Foundation (NSF).

In 2012, he was awarded a \$20 million grant to establish iUTAH, a statewide effort to assist in building the human and research infrastructure needed to sustainably manage Utah's waters through the NSF EPSCoR Program. Most recently, he and FIU collaborators have received \$10 million from NSF for the Center of Research Excellence in Science and Technology (CREST) for Aquatic Chemistry and the Environment. Crowl was a Bullard Fellow at Harvard University and an Office of Research Professor at the University of Notre Dame.

Crowl is the Founding Director of Florida International University's Institute of Environment, an FIU Pre-eminent Program (environment.fiu.edu) that includes more than 150 faculty that provide fundamental and applied research on freshwater, coastal and terrestrial ecosystems. He is the past President of the Association of Ecosystem Research Centers and is on the Board of Directors for the American Institute of Biological Sciences, The Southeastern Universities Research Association and the Biscayne Bay Water Management and Health Board.



Dr. Todd Crowl
Professor and Director Institute of
Environment Florida International
University

MODERATOR

Property Insurance & Emergency Management Speaker Bios

Renata Elias joined Marsh in 2012 and is currently a Senior Engagement Lead within Marsh Advisory's Strategic Risk Consulting Practice. She provides counsel and supports clients in a wide range of sectors with organizational resilience, including crisis management, emergency response, workplace violence (including active shooter), crisis communications, business continuity, pandemic response planning, reputational risk, and disaster and crisis response.

Renata brings to Marsh experience in the public and private sectors, including developing response plans, processes, and procedures. Besides performing capability assessments, she has vast experience designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating awareness/training and exercises, including tabletop sessions and functional exercises for an organization's response and recovery teams. Renata works with organizations in all industry sectors.

She has developed global crisis management programs, crisis, and incident management plans, emergency response plans, and various tabletop exercises for leadership and incident management teams.



Renata Elias
Senior Vice President
Marsh McLennan Agency

Property Insurance & Emergency Management Speaker Bios

Pete Gomez is the Director of the Department of Emergency Management for Miami-Dade County. The Emergency Management Department supports over 2.8 million county resident's disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation needs.

He is a highly motivated and enthusiastic Fire Service professional with a current specialty in the field of Emergency Management. With over 35 years of experience in just about every aspect of the Fire Service, Pete brings a very well-rounded perspective and wealth of experience to any organization. A dynamic leader with great people skills allows him to work closely with all disciplines, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.



Pete Gomez
Director-Department of Emergency
Management
Miami-Dade County

Property Insurance & Emergency Management

Speaker Bios

Amy Knowles serves as the Chief Resilience Officer and the Director of Environment and Sustainability for the City of Miami Beach. Ms. Knowles works closely with a holistic resilience leadership team to implement policies and projects to build a resilient Miami Beach. Miami Beach is a living laboratory for climate change, and Ms. Knowles focuses on integrating climate preparedness planning with nature-based solutions and infrastructure. In planning for sea level rise, Ms. Knowles recently helped to secure \$48 million in resilience funding for projects ranging from dune restoration to infrastructure. She led the city's first vulnerability assessment and the business case analysis of the stormwater program- both highlighting the social and economic importance of protecting Miami Beach. She recently launched Fight the Flood, a Private Property adaptation program to incentivize private property investments in resilience. Notable Miami Beach work on extreme heat includes the Urban Heat Island Ordinance and the Urban Forestry Master Plan.

Ms. Knowles believes collaboration is critical for resilience and works in a unique partnership with Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami, and the Miami Foundation to implement Resilient305, a shared resilience strategy. Ms. Knowles serves on the North American Steering Committee for the Global Resilient Cities Network. She participates in the work of the Southeast Florida Climate Change Compact and Resiliency Florida. Ms. Knowles has traveled to the Netherlands, Chile, and across the United States to study and share resilience strategies.

Ms. Knowles' career in public service includes environmental protection, administration, and planning. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Policy from Binghamton University and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Miami.



Amy Knowles
Chief Resilience Officer
City of Miami

Carbonomics Bayside Chat

Speaker Bios

Hudson's extensive reporting on South Florida's economy has taken him from the waters of Florida Bay to the depths of the PortMiami tunnel (and countless offices and conference rooms). He has interviewed bartenders and bankers, caregivers and CEOs to report on the people behind economic statistics.

He began his business reporting career in March 2000, just weeks after the dot-com bubble burst. He has reported from the trading floors of the CME, Chicago Board Options Exchange, NASDAQ and New York Stock Exchange. He previously served as Vice President of News at WLRN when he created and hosted The Sunshine Economy for 10 years. He was managing editor and co-anchor of Nightly Business Report on PBS.

Hudson is married with two sons and advises every bicycle rider to always wear their helmet.



Tom Hudson
Senior Economics Editor and
Special Correspondent
WLRN News

MODERATOR

Carbonomics Bayside Chat

Speaker Bios

Mr. Gordon S. Bennett has been Managing Director of Utility Markets at Intercontinental Exchange, Inc. since February 2015. Mr. Bennett is responsible for the sales and business development of ICE's global environmental, European and Asian natural gas and electricity, and global coal portfolios. He is a member of the Board of ICE Endex, ICE Futures Abu Dhabi, Spark Commodities and a member of the Strategic Advisory Board of BeZero Carbon.

He was named Environmental Finance's sustainable business leader of the year in 2022 and contributes to a wide range of external environmental and energy market initiatives including being a current member of the UNDP, Advisory Group for Paris Agreement Investments, the Advisory Group for BSI Flex 701 - Nature Markets, the City of London VCM Steering Committee, the VCMI Stakeholder Forum, the Advisory Board of the University of Cambridge Energy Policy Research Group. He has also served on the Nature Based Solutions Taskforce of the Sustainable Markets Initiative and the Transition to Net Zero Working Group of the FCA and Bank of England's Climate Financial Risk Forum.

Prior to ICE, Mr. Bennett spent 12 years at the global energy broker, Spectron, joining as Group Financial Controller. During his tenure at Spectron he held several Board roles including Chief Financial Officer and Chief Executive Officer. After the acquisition of Spectron by Marex he joined the Executive Committee of Marex Spectron in the role of Managing Director and Global Head of Energy.



Gordon Bennett
Managing Director
Utility Markets
Intercontinental Exchange