



### Session Speakers

Queen Quet - Gullah/Geechee Nation

Dr. Astrid Caldas - Union of Concerned Scientists

Dr. Kate Derickson - University of Minnesota

### Session Title

Disya We Way: Gullah/Geechee Coastal Collaboration for Resilience and Adaptation

### Session Description

Disya We Way: Gullah/Geechee Coastal Collaboration for Resilience and Adaptation will be an interactive session led by members of the Gullah/Geechee Sustainability Think Tank including Queen Quet, Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation, Astrid Caldas of the Union of Concerned Scientists, Elder Carlie Towne of the Gullah/Geechee Angel Network, Glenda Simmons-Jenkins of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Committee of Northeast Florida, and Dr. Kate Derickson of the Department of Geography at the University of Minnesota. This group has collaborated on a number of adaptation and resilience activities. They will share the knowledge that they have gained by incorporating the traditional practices and knowledge of the Gullah/Geechee people in the work that they have done to examine and plan for the effects of climate change, sea level rise, flooding, and storms on the Sea Islands and in the Lowcountry.

The Carolinas Lowcountry is no stranger to coastal flooding, but according to the results of a study conducted by the Union of Concerned Scientists, the chronic inundation zone is projected to reach parts of the Sea Islands and Lowcountry that form the Gullah/Geechee Nation and Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor within just the next 20 years under a conservative scenario of sea level rise. Most of Sea Islands and Lowcountry on the South Carolina coast will be facing chronic inundation by mid-century.

Much more than land is at risk there: the history, heritage, culture, and language of the Gullah/Geechee – which are their strength and are also essential tools in their adaptation and resilience plans. Research has shown that, when a close-knit community is faced with challenges such as flooding, it fares much better than those without a support network. The Gullah/Geechee people are in a unique position to capitalize on their rich social capital when it comes to adaptation and resilience to sea level rise. Research also shows that when adaptation

measures include traditional knowledge, better outcomes are observed. The long-standing knowledge of the Gullah/Geechee Nation in how to recover from, and adapt to storms and coastal weather can therefore be extremely useful not only for themselves but for many other communities facing the risks of inundation.

We propose that communities use their available time to implement a portfolio of responses, supported by traditional knowledge as well as national, state and local policies and this session will show how we have begun the process of doing that.