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Monitoring Heritage at Risk Sites in Rapidly Changing Coastal Environments

Sarah E. Miller, Jeneva P. Wright, and David G. Anderson, Guest Editors

ARTICLES

179–184 **Foreword: Monitoring Heritage at Risk Sites in Rapidly Changing Coastal Environments: Examples from the Southeastern United States and Beyond**

David G. Anderson, Sarah E. Miller, and Jeneva P. Wright

185–201 **In Situ Biofilm Collection: Implications for the Management of Historic Submerged Aircraft Wrecks**

Dominic Bush

HOW-TO SERIES

202–218 **North American Heritage at Risk (NAHAR) Research Pipeline and Collaborative Community**

Sarah E. Miller, Emily Jane Murray, Kassie Kemp, Lori Lee, Glenda Simmons-Jenkins, Lindsey Cochran, and Meg Gaillard

219–232 **Investigating Heritage and Climate Change in the Coastal and Maritime Environments of Wales and Ireland: A Guide to the CHERISH Toolkit**

Louise Barker and Anthony Corns

233–244 **Community Coastal Zone Assessment Surveys: Methods and Experiences from Scotland**

Joanna Hambly, Sarah Boyd, and Tom Dawson

245–258 **The Timing of Sea-Level Rise Impacts to Cultural Heritage Sites along the Georgia Coast, USA, through Fine-Grain Ecological Modeling**

Lindsey E. Cochran, Victor D. Thompson, David G. Anderson, Christine M. Hladik, and Ellen Herbert

259–275 **Landscape Histories and the Search for Early Settlements along Louisiana's Bayous**

Steven J. Filoromo, Emily K. Dale, and Paul D. Jackson

276–288 **Testing of Shoreline Erosion Monitoring Methodologies for Heritage at Risk Sites: Pockoy Island, South Carolina, USA**

Meg Gaillard, Katie Luciano, Gary Sundin, Kiersten Weber, and Karen Y. Smith

289–301 **Monitoring Shoreline Erosion at Calusa Island: A Community-Accessible Method**

Rachael Kangas, Michelle J. LeFebvre, Jennifer Green, Sara Ayers-Rigsby, Cindy Bear, Natalie De La Torre Salas, and Annisa Karim

302–312 **Overcoming Dichotomies with Heritage: Community Conversations and Collecting Data on the Florida Gulf Coast in an Era of Rising Sea Levels**

Uzi Baram

313–321 **Exploring Climate Change Adaptations for Cultural Heritage: The ADAPT Framework**

Jeneva P. Wright and Morris Hylton III

DIGITAL REVIEW

322–329 **Launching HMS Florida: A Community Engagement App-Based Workflow for Assessing Climate-Change Impacts on Cultural Sites**

Sarah E. Miller

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On the Cover: Emily Jane Murray poses at a coquina well during a monitoring trip to Shell Bluff Landing after Hurricane Irma in 2017 (courtesy of FPAN). Shell Bluff Landing, located in northeast Florida, contains evidence of 6,000 years of human occupation: Native Floridians lived there beginning in the Archaic period, the Spanish built a mission in the area, the first governor of British Florida grew rice and indigo on the land, and a Minorcan man held it as a Spanish land grant. AND the material evidence at the site, including a dense oyster shell midden, a diffuse historic artifact scatter, and a Minorcan-built well, have the potential to inform us of how the various people used the land and its resources for millennia. BUT the site, sitting on the banks of the Intracoastal Waterway, suffers from severe erosion exacerbated by boat wake action, storm events, and coastal changes. Climate-change impacts will increase and intensify some of these effects, and unfortunately, mitigation options are limited due to the high energy environment. THEREFORE, we must study the site through frequent monitoring and excavation, as well as visit and enjoy it, before it erodes away completely.

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