Bridging the Gulfs –
Interdisciplinary Methods for Stakeholder Engagement and Collaborative Research in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System

September 22 & 23, 2014
Wells Reserve, Maine

(Agenda will be modified for Texas training in January 2015)

About this Workshop
Collaborative research is one method for “bridging the gulf” between science and policy. The NERRS Science Collaborative (NSC) has supported projects that use interdisciplinary methods for understanding stakeholder priorities and engaging them in collaborative projects with researchers. Applying methods for stakeholder engagement in collaborative research, and fostering the use of science in decision-making and policy has been the focus of most of the NSC projects. The Wells, Maine and Mission-Aransas, Texas NERRs projects have used different methods to understand and engage stakeholders and researchers in their projects. The Bridging the Gulfs training aims to share those methods more broadly in the NERR system by developing two trainings - one to be delivered at the Wells NERR in the Gulf of Maine and one to be delivered at the Mission-Aransas NERR in the Gulf of Mexico. Reserve staff, coastal managers and researchers in each region are the audience for the trainings. The trainings combine transfer of collaborative research methodologies between Texas and Maine and engages other reserves in a discussion of lessons learned and collaborative research best practices that can be adopted across the NERRS.

Both the Wells NERR and Mission-Aransas NERR projects have expanded upon the framework provided by Collaborative Learning to explicitly assess stakeholder understanding, foster the development of shared knowledge and move diverse stakeholder groups toward mutually agreed upon improvements in management and policy. In addition to the Maine and Texas examples, the Chesapeake Bay Maryland NERR has adapted Collaborative Learning in a project focusing on marsh and human community resilience that will be included in the training. The Bridging the Gulfs training builds competencies in particular collaborative research methodologies including: conducting a communications audit, mediated modeling, mental modeling and resilience practice. Evaluation of additional practices will be shared among participants to begin to develop a Bridging the Gulfs Best Practices Primer for the NERRS and key partners.

Workshop Goal: build awareness, capacity and skills needed to enable coastal management and research communities to use expert interdisciplinary practices to engage stakeholders in developing and implementing collaborative research projects that link science to coastal management and policy.

Target Audience: NERRS staff (CTP, Stewardship, Research, GIS), coastal managers, and researchers

Presenters and Facilitators
- Dr. Verna DeLauer, Clark University
- Dr. Christine Feurt, Wells NERR and University of New England
- Dr. Kalle Matso, NERRS Science Collaborative
- Dr. Michael Paolisso, University of Maryland
- Dr. Tarla Rai Peterson, Texas A&M University
Day 1

8:30  Registration/Breakfast

9:00  Welcome & Introductions (Feurt)

Challenges and Rewards of Collaborative Learning - Perspectives from the Field (Feurt)

*Participants will share their work and challenges encountered in collaborative projects and research*

10:30 Collaborative Learning as a Tool for Community Resilience - The Deal Island Marsh and Community Project (Paolisso)

11:30 Using Communication Audit/Mental Modeling to increase the impact and application of science to decision making (DeLauer)

12:30 Lunch

1:15 Building competency for communications audit and mental modeling (DeLauer)

*Small Group Work*

2:30 Model Sharing and Facilitated Discussion (DeLauer)

3:30 Applying mental model approaches back on the job

*Listening Walk to the Little River Inlet*

5:30 Lobster Dinner together at the Reserve
Day 2

8:30  Breakfast

9:00  Morning Refresher (Feurt)

9:15  Introduction to Systems Thinking and Mediated Modeling (Peterson)

10:15 Conceptual Modeling applied to your work (Peterson)

  Small Group Work

11:15 Group Discussion: Challenges, Limitations and Opportunities (Peterson)

12:15 Lunch

1:00  Stakeholder’s Panel (Feurt & Matso)

1:45  Collaborative Learning Professionals Panel (Feurt & Matso)

  Members of the group will share examples of collaborative projects including lessons learned and challenges. Focus will be on the NERRS Science Collaborative projects, but there may be participants who have worked on collaborative projects who are not from the NERRS.

3:15  Group generated Best Practices for collaborative research and engagement

4:00  Closing and Evaluations