

Heather M. Leslie

Professor, School of Marine Sciences

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Education

1992-1996 AB cum laude in Biology, Harvard University
1998-2004 PhD in Zoology, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon
Graduate Advisors: Profs. Jane Lubchenco and Bruce Menge

Professional Appointments and Relevant Employment

7/2021-on Professor, University of Maine
8/2015-5/23 Director, Darling Marine Center
8/2015-8/21 Associate Professor, University of Maine
5/2012-6/15 Adjunct Assistant Scientist, Ecosystems Center, Marine Biological Laboratory
7/07-7/15 Sharpe Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies & Biology, Brown Univ.
2007-2009 Visiting Research Collaborator, Princeton University
2004-2007 Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Princeton University (*Advisor: Prof. Simon Levin*)
1998-2004 Graduate Research/Teaching Assistant (various positions), Oregon State Univ.
1998 Public Relations and Campus Coordinator, UMaine Darling Marine Center
1997-1998 AmeriCorps Volunteer with PADRE, a grassroots Maine environmental nonprofit
1997-1998 Researcher, Manomet Center for Conservation Science (Brunswick, Maine)
1996-1997 Volunteer Researcher, Pronatura Yucatan (Merida, Mexico)
1996-1997 Volunteer Researcher, Instituto de Ciencias del Mar y Limnología (Mazatlán)
1995 REU Fellow, H. J. Andrews Experimental Forest, Oregon State University
1993, 1994 Researcher and Community Liaison, Massachusetts Audubon Society

Select Peer-Reviewed Publications (5 most relevant of 67)

Risley, S., M. L. Britsch, J. S. Stoll, **H. M. Leslie**. 2025. Mapping local knowledge supports science and stewardship. *Ambio* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-025-02170-4>.

McGreavy, B., K. Haynal, J. Smith-Mayo, J. Reilly-Moman, M. T. Kinnison, D. Ranco, **H. M. Leslie**. 2022. How does strategic communication shape transdisciplinary collaboration? A focus on definitions, audience, expertise, and ethical praxis. *Frontiers in Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2022.831727>

Pellowe, K.E.. & **H. M. Leslie**. 2020. Ecosystem service lens reveals diverse community values of small-scale fisheries. *Ambio* 50(3): 586-600.

Leslie, H. M., and 16 others. 2015. Operationalizing the social-ecological systems framework to assess sustainability. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112: 5979–5984.

Leslie, H. M., and 10 others. 2013. How good science and stories can go hand-in-hand. *Conservation Biology* 27:1126-29.

Select Recent Grants

2023-2028 NRT: Ecosystem science in the face of rapid ocean change: a convergence approach (\$2,991,842). NSF project initiated 8.1.23 (HL, Co-PI)

2022-2026 Community Science to Support Sustainable and Local Seafood Production in Maine. (\$281,653). NOAA SK project approved 7.22 (HL, Lead PI)

2022-2024 “Building capacity for participatory approaches to community resilience and ocean renewable energy siting” (\$138,132). Northeast Regional Sea Grant project initiated 6.22 (HL, Lead PI)

2020-2022 CNH2-S: Measuring adaptive responses that strengthen governance of marine resources in small coastal fishing communities (\$749,598). Funded by US NSF. (HL, Co-PI).

2019-2024 RII Track-1: Molecule to Ecosystem: Environmental DNA as a Nexus of Coastal Ecosystem Sustainability for Maine (\$20,000,000). Funded by NSF (HL, co-PI).

Select Policy Briefings and Science Communication Activities

Invited testimony, Joint Legislative Committee on Marine Resources, Augusta, ME (2019, 2020, 2021); COMPASS communications & engagement workshop on People and Ocean Change (co-lead), Arlie, VA (2017); President Obama’s Ocean Policy Task Force Working Group (2009)

Synergistic Activities

1. *Scientific leader in advancing coupled systems science and graduate education.* Leslie leads an interdisciplinary, multi-institutional research and graduate training program focused on the social-ecological systems associated with Maine and Mexico coastal communities and fisheries.
2. *Diversifying and expanding the marine and conservation workforce.* Leslie co-founded and led an applied marine science workforce development program in Maine linking university researchers, undergraduates, and marine industry professionals, SEA Fellows. She also founded an undergraduate training program at Brown University, Voss Environmental Fellows.
3. *Engaged and public scholar.* Leslie is a Leopold Leadership Fellow and Storymakers Fellow. She has briefed local, state, and federal decision makers on diverse topics, including ecosystem-based management, community resilience, and protected areas. Leslie served as co-lead on the Maine Climate Council’s Coastal & Marine Working Group (2019-22) and currently is vice-chair of the board of trustees of The Nature Conservancy in Maine.
4. *Contributing to statewide economic and workforce development.* Leslie co-founded the Alliance for Maine’s Marine Economy. She was the founding chair (2017-2018) and served as a member of the Advisory Group (2017-2019).

Teaching & Mentoring

Dr. Leslie has taught courses in conservation science and ecology at multiple universities, and supervised 31 undergraduate theses and capstone projects, 15 graduate student theses, and seven postdocs. She is committed to diversifying and expanding the marine and conservation workforce.