Title: Synthesis of aquatic vegetation subject matter expert feedback to improve restoration strategies

Abstract: On 6-7 May 2026, ERDC Environmental Laboratory researchers hosted a 2-half-day virtual workshop, “Benefits and challenges of active restoration of emergent and submersed aquatic vegetation efforts in rivers and reservoirs.” The goal of the workshop was for aquatic vegetation subject matter experts (SMEs) to provide their perspectives on restoration successes and failures, established and innovative restoration techniques, and opportunities to scale up these techniques for system-scale applications. Over 30 SMEs, working in both fresh and estuarine systems and representing government agencies, academic institutions, and the private sector, identified herbivory as the top challenge for aquatic vegetation restoration projects. Other notable challenges included variable and stochastic environmental conditions, such as fluctuating water levels and storm disturbance, poor water quality from elevated turbidity and algal blooms, and project management and implementation issues, such as permitting hurdles and long-term maintenance and monitoring. The SMEs discussed actionable ideas to address these challenges, which will be explored in mesocosm and field experiments.

Presenter:

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Bio: Dr. Emily Russ is a research biologist on the Integrated Ecological Modeling Team within the Wetlands and Coastal Ecology Branch in the Environmental Laboratory. Her research focuses on coastal vegetation modeling, including developing statistical and processed-based submerged aquatic vegetation models.