



ECOS

2026 ECOS Spring Meeting: Environment-Economy Nexus

JW Marriott Savannah Plant Riverside District

500 W River St, Savannah, Georgia

March 29-April 1, 2026

#ECOSSpring26

With its iconic Spanish moss and a large swath of freshwater marshland – along with booming tourism and manufacturing and one of the nation's busiest ports – Savannah serves as a vivid illustration of the coexistence of nature and commerce. Against this backdrop, the Spring Meeting showcases ways to balance environmental protection and economic development. Sessions will explore state environmental agency successes in the areas of wetlands protection, water infrastructure and affordability, cooperative federalism amid delegation and deregulation, resilience, PFAS and land cleanup, artificial intelligence, data centers, workforce solutions, and more. Also sure to make a splash is an interactive Shark Tank on water reuse. The ECOS member agencies in Georgia and South Carolina will jointly host the gathering in a display of regional cooperation.

- 1) Except where highlighted in green, all sessions are open to all registrants, including press.
- 2) ECOS encourages a climate of open discussion among all meeting attendees, not only state leaders seated around the plenary table. Please ask a question or offer input during Q&A.
- 3) River Landing, District Live, and Salzburg Ballroom & Terrace are located on the ground level of the JW Marriott's Atlantic Building. Amethyst 1 and 2 and Kessler Boardroom are located on the ground level of JW Marriott's Power Plant Building.

Sunday, March 29 Early Registration & Welcome Event

4:00 – 4:30 p.m. River Landing	Registration Desk Open <i>Please stop by the registration desk to receive a name badge to be worn throughout the meeting.</i>
4:45 – 6:30 p.m. 209 W. River St. Savannah, GA	"Savannah for Morons" Trolley Tour <i>Open to Spring Meeting attendees and their guests for an extra fee on a first-come, first-served basis. Complete the signup during registration. Pickup at 4:45 p.m. from the local tour bus stand located at 209 W. River Street in front of Black Dog General Store, about a five-minute walk from the JW Marriott. Tour runs from 5-6:30 p.m.</i>

Monday, March 30 Environment-Economy Nexus & Water

7:15 a.m. River Landing	Registration Desk Open <i>Please stop by the registration desk to receive a name badge to be worn throughout the meeting.</i>
7:15 – 9:15 a.m. District Live	Buffet Breakfast

8:15 – 9:15 a.m. Salzburg Ballroom	<p>Breakout Option #1: ECOS Oil & Gas Caucus (O&GC) on Data Center Solutions</p> <p><i>To reduce the environmental footprint of water- and energy-hungry data centers, states and partners are driving the use of produced water for cooling and sustainably sourced natural gas for power. Hear about real-world solutions that could be replicated in your state.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ECOS O&GC Co-Chair Dave Glatt, Director, North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality (co-moderator) ❖ ECOS Past President and O&GC Co-Chair James Kenney, Cabinet Secretary, New Mexico Environment Department (co-moderator) ❖ Colin Leyden, Texas State Director, Environmental Defense Fund ❖ Melissa Trevino, Assistant Vice President for Power, Oxy ❖ Matthias Sayer, Vice President, Bradfute Sayer
8:15 – 9:15 a.m. Amethyst 1	<p>Breakout Option #2: ECOS Digital Business Workgroup (DBWG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ECOS Digital Business Workgroup Vice Chair Miriam Patrocinio, Chief Data Officer, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (co-moderator)
8:15 – 9:15 a.m. Kessler Boardroom	<p>Breakout Option #3: Environmental Research Institute of the States (ERIS) Board Meeting (open to ERIS members, states, and invitees)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ERIS President Jess Byrne, Director, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (Chair)
9:25 – 9:55 a.m. Salzburg Ballroom	<p>Opening Plenary Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Call to Order, ECOS President Chris Wells, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality ❖ Self-Introduction of Members {10} ❖ Joint Host State Welcome, Jeff Cown, Director, Georgia Environmental Protection Division, and Myra Reece, Director, South Carolina Department of Environmental Services {10} ❖ Agenda Preview, Chris Wells {5} ❖ Executive Director's Announcements, ECOS Executive Director Ben Grumbles {5}
9:55 – 11:00 a.m. Salzburg Ballroom	<p>Officers Roundtable & Problem-Solving Session: State Strides in Aligning Environmental & Economic Development Goals</p> <p><i>Amid national emphasis on affordability and job creation, state environmental agencies face the balancing act of protecting the environment while remaining mindful of statewide economic growth goals. Hear from ECOS officers on their creative approaches, followed by an extended problem-solving session open to all members.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ECOS President Chris Wells, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (moderator) ❖ ECOS Vice President Leah Feldon, Director, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality ❖ ECOS Secretary-Treasurer Rob Singletary, Executive Director, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality ❖ ECOS Past President James Kenney, Cabinet Secretary, New Mexico Environment Department
11:00 – 11:10 a.m. Salzburg Ballroom	<p>U.S. Department of Energy Savannah River Site on Initiatives Advancing the Environment-Economy Nexus</p>
11:10 – 11:35 a.m. River Landing	<p>Break with Refreshments & Technology Fair</p>

11:35 a.m. – 12:25 p.m. Salzburg Ballroom	Roundtable & Open Discussion: Promoting Stewardship of Wetlands & Watersheds <i>States have an important role in the stewardship of streams and wetlands to protect downstream water quality, manage flooding risks, and preserve water resources critical to their economies. State, federal, and NGO leaders will discuss policy mechanisms to incentivize protection, as well as technological tools like advanced mapping to safeguard waters and wetlands.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ECOS Water Committee Chair Karen Peters, Director, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (moderator) (invited) ❖ Lee Forsgren, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of the Army (Civil Works) (invited) ❖ John Farner, Executive Director for Land & Water, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy ❖ TBD, State
12:30 – 1:40 p.m. District Live	Lunch with Joint Keynote Address on Regional Cooperation & Environment-Economy Nexus: The Honorable Brian Kemp, Governor of Georgia (invited) and The Honorable Henry McMaster, Governor of South Carolina (invited) , introduced by Jeff Cown, Director, Georgia Environmental Protection Division, and Myra Reece, Director, South Carolina Department of Environmental Services
1:50 – 2:50 p.m. Salzburg Ballroom	Shark Tank & Live Vote on Water Reuse Solutions <i>On the heels of the Fall Meeting Shark Tank on AI and permitting, ECOS will host another fun and interactive competition – this time showcasing private sector and NGO capabilities to forge partnerships with ECOS members toward meeting unprecedented water needs. The challenge: Can you mastermind a policy solution that incorporates innovative regulatory strategies or technologies to help state environmental agencies meet water, energy, or economic growth demands through water reuse? The winner will be decided by the audience via live vote.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ECOS Air Committee Vice Chair Jessica Shirley, Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (State Shark) ❖ Brooke Paup, Chairwoman, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (State Shark) (invited) ❖ Patrick Cummins, Director of Environmental Health & Protection, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (State Shark)
2:50 – 3:15 p.m. River Landing	Break with Refreshments & Technology Fair
3:15 – 4:10 p.m. Salzburg Ballroom	Roundtable & Open Discussion: Building a Holistic National Water Strategy on Affordability, Infrastructure, & Economic Growth <i>Using the Aspen Institute's recent National Water Strategy dialogue as a springboard, state and industry stakeholders will explore the necessary components to ensure a holistic approach to the nation's water challenges. Panelists, including contributors to the strategy's development, will discuss key aspects of a national framework, including water infrastructure, affordability, resilience, and economic growth.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Julie Moore, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (moderator) ❖ Timothy Male, Executive Director, Environmental Policy Innovation Center ❖ Tim Davis, Executive Director, Utah Department of Environmental Quality ❖ Mae Stevens, CEO, Current Strategies (invited)
4:10 – 4:15 p.m. Salzburg Ballroom	Day 1 Announcements & Wrap-up , ECOS President Chris Wells of Mississippi

<p>5:00 – 6:15 p.m. Salzburg Terrace & River Landing 6:15 – 7:00 p.m. District Live</p>	<p>Dinner Reception followed by Savannah Gospel Experience with The Digistar Band <i>Open to Spring Meeting attendees at no charge and to their guests for an extra fee. Complete the signup during registration.</i></p>
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Tuesday, March 31

Cooperative Federalism, Air, Resilience, PFAS, Superfund, & AI

<p>7:00 – 7:40 a.m. Amethyst 2</p>	<p>Riverside Yoga, led by ECOS Past President & Vinyasa yoga instructor James Kenney, Cabinet Secretary, New Mexico Environment Department</p>
<p>7:30 a.m. River Landing</p>	<p>Registration Desk Open</p>
<p>7:30 – 9:15 a.m. District Live</p>	<p>Buffet Breakfast</p>
<p>8:15 – 9:15 a.m. Salzburg Ballroom</p>	<p>Breakout Option #1: Listening Session on Heat Policy Innovation <i>The Heat Policy Innovation Hub at Duke University's Nicholas Institute will host a listening session to consider extreme heat and intersections with environmental and economic outcomes. The conversation will highlight the Hub's research on the impacts of heat across key economic sectors. Participants are invited to share perspectives and policy solutions from their states and regions.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Terry Gray, Director, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (moderator) ❖ Ashley Ward, Director, Heat Policy Innovation Hub, Duke University's Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment, & Sustainability </p>
<p>8:15 – 9:15 a.m. Amethyst 1</p>	<p>Breakout Option #2: ECOS Federal Facilities Forum (FFF) (open to ECOS members and staff)</p>
<p>9:20 – 9:45 a.m. Salzburg Ballroom</p>	<p>Second Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Call to Order, ECOS President Chris Wells, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality </p>
<p>9:45 – 10:35 a.m. Salzburg Ballroom</p>	<p>Roundtable & Open Discussion: Cooperative Federalism in a Time of Delegation & Deregulation <i>As the federal government pursues a deregulatory agenda, states are navigating an increasingly complex environmental landscape with heightened expectations and strained resources. This panel convenes federal and state environmental leaders to examine the practical realities of cooperative federalism amid these shifting dynamics. Panelists will discuss how states are administering core environmental programs while adapting to a changing regulatory framework. The conversation will explore strategies for sustaining effective environmental protection through stronger and more resilient federal-state partnerships.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ECOS Vice President Leah Feldon, Director, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (moderator) ❖ ECOS Compliance Committee Chair Bonnie Heiple, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (invited) ❖ ECOS Air Committee Chair Clint Woods, Commissioner, Indiana Department of Environmental Management (invited) ❖ Casey Sixkiller, Director, Washington Department of Ecology (invited) ❖ Travis Voyles, Associate Deputy Administrator, U.S. EPA </p>

10:35 – 11:00 a.m. River Landing	Break with Refreshments & Technology Fair
11:00 – 11:50 a.m. Salzburg Ballroom	<p>Roundtable & Open Discussion: Innovations to Improve & Accelerate PFAS Cleanup at Superfund Sites</p> <p><i>PFAS cleanup at Superfund sites presents significant technical and policy challenges necessitating better interim and final remedies, effective removal approaches, and progressive federal and Congressional policies. This roundtable will highlight innovative options to improve and accelerate cleanup, and will focus on the importance of protecting innocent PFAS receivers.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ECOS Past President James Kenney, Cabinet Secretary, New Mexico Environment Department (moderator) (invited) ❖ Jake Kennedy, Senior Professional Staff Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works (invited) ❖ AnnieLu DeWitt, Vice President - Total PFAS Solution, Clean Harbors ❖ TBD, VLS Environmental Solutions ❖ Rosa Gwinn, Global PFAS Technical Lead, AECOM
12:00 – 1:10 p.m. District Live	<p>Lunch with Keynote Address on Local Economic & Environmental Strides: Trip Tollison, CEO & President, Savannah Economic Development Authority, introduced by Jeff Cown, Director, Georgia Environmental Protection Division</p>
1:10 – 1:50 p.m. Salzburg Ballroom	<p>Problem-Solving Session on PFAS & Drinking Water Standards: Staying Ahead of the Curve</p> <p><i>How should state agencies be ready to support water systems as they prepare to comply with the new PFAS drinking water standards? Moreover, how can states anticipate and manage the chain reaction within the PFAS lifecycle that will come from installing and maintaining additional PFAS treatment systems? Join this session for an engaging discussion of the air, water, and waste implications of removing PFAS from drinking water – and what state regulators need to know as this work accelerates. Bring your questions and lessons learned!</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Bob Scott, Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (moderator) ❖ ECOS North Carolina Alumna Elizabeth Biser, President, Biser Strategies (subject matter expert)
1:50 – 2:40 p.m. Salzburg Ballroom	<p>Roundtable & Open Discussion: AI Partnerships at Work in the States</p> <p><i>In light of the advantages AI may unlock for the future workplace, state environmental agencies have begun incorporating this technology in permitting, compliance, and other functions. This panel will highlight tangible applications and partnerships underway to improve environmental services, as well as ways in which states are funding AI solutions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ECOS At-Large Board Member Jennifer Carr, Administrator, Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (moderator) ❖ Sean Briggs, Chief Technology Officer, South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (invited) ❖ TBD, Windsor Solutions ❖ TBD, State ❖ TBD, Tech Developer
2:40 – 3:05 p.m. River Landing	Break with Refreshments & Technology Fair

3:05 – 3:55 p.m. Salzburg Ballroom	Problem-Solving Session on Workforce Solutions Amid Increasing Demand & Decreasing Dollars <i>New administrations, new strategic plans, new budget appropriations, and new technology may lead to adjustments in workload, workflow, work practices, and work recruiting and retention. States are invited to share examples of how workforce and work practices are evolving in FY26 and beyond to meet current needs with current resources.</i> ❖ ECOS Budget & Management Committee Vice Chair James Jennings, Director, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (moderator)
3:55 – 4:00 p.m. Salzburg Ballroom	Closing Remarks & Call to Adjourn , ECOS President Chris Wells of Mississippi
4:30 – 7:00 p.m. 37 Meddin Dr. North Beach Parking Lot Tybee Island, GA	Island Ecology Beach Trek & Gallery Tour at Tybee Island Marine Center <i>Open only to Spring Meeting attendees at no charge on a first-come, first-served basis. Complete the signup during registration. Buses will depart the JW Marriott Power Plant Building valet area for Tybee Island Marine Center at 4:30 p.m. and will depart the marine center at 6:30 p.m. for a return drop-off at the JW Marriott.</i>
<i>Evening open for individually arranged meetings and dinners.</i>	

Wednesday, April 1
States-Only Business & Brownfield Tour

7:30 a.m. River Landing	Registration Desk Open
7:00 – 8:00 a.m. District Live	Buffet Breakfast
8:00 – 9:45 a.m. Salzburg Ballroom	States-Only Session (open to ECOS members and staff), led by ECOS President Chris Wells, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
9:45 – 10:00 a.m. River Landing	Break with Refreshments
10:00 – 11:00 a.m. Salzburg Ballroom	ECOS Board Meeting (open to ECOS members and staff), led by ECOS President Chris Wells of Mississippi
12:10 – 1:50 p.m. SeaPoint Industrial Terminal Complex 100 SeaPoint Blvd. Savannah, GA	Brownfield Site Visit at SeaPoint Industrial Terminal's Cleantech Incubator <i>Open only to Spring Meeting attendees at no charge on a first-come, first-served basis. Complete the signup during registration. A bus will depart the JW Marriott Power Plant Building valet area for the SeaPoint Industrial Terminal Complex at 12:10 p.m. and will depart SeaPoint at 1:30 p.m. for a return drop-off at the JW Marriott.</i>