

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



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RESEARCH

Beaches are critical contributors to the Blue Economy as providers of regulating (e.g., flood protection), provisioning (e.g., tourism revenue and jobs), and supporting (e.g., biodiversity of marine life) ecosystem services that sustain the livelihoods and safeguard the well-being of coastal communities. Key to management of these coupled social-ecological systems (SES) is sound monitoring. Resilience scholars advise that monitoring systems should capture the interdependencies between social and ecological components and reflect stakeholder priorities for ecosystem services. This is challenging and rarely realized. Yet, understanding these inter-dependencies is critical because SES management and policymaking inherently involves making trade-offs between ecosystem services. Virgie's dissertation answers this challenge by developing a monitoring framework called the Galveston BEACH (Beaches, Economic Activity, and Community Health) Report Card.

The Galveston BEACH Report Card supports the ASBPA mission of preserving, protecting and enhancing our coasts by merging science and public policy. The report card information will benefit state, regional, and local public officials in making decisions that maximize the economic return of clean, safe beaches. Residents and tourists will benefit from the report card's emphasis on the interaction between their economic activities and beach environmental quality and community health, which can guide their consumer choices and environmental behavior.