



Athan Barkoukis

Executive Director of Friends of Rookery Bay

Athan Barkoukis joined Friends of Rookery Bay as Executive Director in 2017. Barkoukis brings a mix of environmental research and non-profit management experience to the Friends. He earned a Master of Science in Environmental Studies from the College of Charleston and a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Colgate University. Whether studying climate change in Antarctica, building artificial reefs in the Gulf of Mexico, monitoring fish populations in the Atlantic Ocean, or serving as director to numerous non-profit organizations, Barkoukis is committed to protecting our environment.



Keith Laakkonen

Director of Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Keith Laakkonen is the Director of the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Naples, Florida. He is responsible for administration and supervision of the 110,000-acre Reserve, working with more than thirty on-site employees involved in research, education, and coastal stewardship.

Current priority efforts at the Reserve include watershed restoration, maintaining native biodiversity, and research and monitoring. He also serves as the state's Regional Administrator for aquatic preserves in Southwest Florida, with oversight for field offices and staff in Tampa Bay, Charlotte Harbor and Estero Bay.

Keith worked for seven years as Environmental Sciences Coordinator for the Town of Fort Myers Beach. He has worked in resource management at the Charlotte Harbor State Buffer Preserve, St. Martin's Marsh Aquatic and Buffer Preserve, and Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve. He was also the Stewardship Coordinator at Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve as the Stewardship Coordinator from 2005 to 2007.

Keith has extensive experience with watershed management and restoration, listed species management, wildlife ecology, land acquisition, prescribed fire management, hydrologic restoration, exotic plant and animal management, public access management, and environmental education and outreach. He began his career as an intern conducting research on American alligators with the Florida Fish & Wildlife Cooperative Research Unit in Gainesville after graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Florida in 1998. Keith completed his Master's Degree, focusing on sea-level rise policy in Florida at FGCU in 2018.

A native Floridian, he is an avid birder and fisherman and enjoys exploring Collier County. He also volunteers for many environmental causes. Keith has lived in Florida for his entire life and has been a Collier County resident since 2005.