

Dr Coleen Suckling is a marine eco-physiologist who is working towards understanding how human induced changes, such as climate change and plastic pollution affect marine organisms, with a scope to sustain marine based ecosystems and predict responses in the future to help retain economic and environmental sustainability. This work is achieved through a combination of working in the coastal areas collecting samples and animals to study, simulating conditions such as climate change and microplastic pollution in a laboratory-controlled research aquaria as well as working with local communities, stakeholders and decision makers.

Dr Suckling has built this experience through her career through working in the aquaculture industry in Mozambique, studying marine biology and oceanography (BSc and MSc) in Bangor University and her PhD in Earth Sciences in the University of Cambridge in England, UK. This has been followed by academic roles including her current role as an Assistant Professor in Sustainable Aquaculture in the University of Rhode Island (URI). Dr Suckling has been part of the leading efforts to address of plastic pollution by helping drive forward a Plastics Initiative Collaborative Lab network (called COLAB) in URI which broadens networks and workforce training in this field. Such efforts include the creation of a course for undergraduate and graduate students to better understand the issue of plastic pollution and to gain hands on experience on working with these difficult pollutants, which in part are aimed to help early career professionals keep up with this rapidly evolving area of research.

In this talk Dr Suckling will briefly overview some of our current understanding and efforts on marine organismal interactions and responses to microscopic sized plastics known as microplastics (defined as being less than 5mm in length) and help identify some major sources they can come from.

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