

# Speaker Biographies

## RON ALVERSON

RETIRED SOUTH DAKOTA CORN AND SOYBEAN PRODUCER



From 1974 to 2015 Ron owned and operated a grain production enterprise near Chester, South Dakota. Ron graduated from South Dakota State University in 1974 with a BS degree in Agronomy/Soil Science. He was a founder and past president of the South Dakota Corn Growers Association and past Board member of the National Corn Growers Association. Ron was also a founder and is a current Board Member of Lake Area Corn Processors LLC (Dakota Ethanol), a 90 million gallon/year ethanol production plant at Wentworth, SD, where he works on low carbon ethanol fuel pathways. He is past President of the American Coalition for Ethanol. Past honors include the South Dakota “Master Farmer” award, the South Dakota State University “Eminent Farmer” award, the South Dakota Corn Growers Association “Excellence in Agriculture” award, and the 2018 Renewable Fuels Association “Industry” award.

## GIANA AMADOR

CO-FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR, CARBON180



Giana Amador is the Co-founder and Managing Director at Carbon180. Prior to joining Carbon180, Giana focused on state-level renewable energy policy in the United States. She received her B.S. in Environmental Economics & Policy and B.S. in Society & the Environment from UC Berkeley.

## CHAD BLOOM

DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, PHEASANTS FOREVER



Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever is dedicated to the conservation of pheasants, quail and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness, education and land management policies and programs. Chad started with Pheasants Forever as a volunteer to pay back the great experiences and enhance the resources people used to teach him about the outdoors. He now works for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever building partnerships and fundraising for conservation habitat, education and outreach programs, and advocacy. He is passionate about the opportunity sustainability creates to bring a variety of stakeholders together to increase farm profitability, strengthen rural economies, and implement conservation habitat.

## DAVID E CLAY

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR SOIL SCIENCE, SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY



Dr. David E. Clay received a B.S degree from the University of Wisconsin (Madison), M.S. Degree from the University of Idaho, and Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. Currently, he is a Distinguished Professor of Soil Science at South Dakota State University. He has served on the Editorial Board for the Agronomy Journal in a number of roles including Associate Editor, Technical Editor, and Editor. In addition, he is an editor or author of 15 books and has published over 250 papers. Dr. Clay’s research goal is to develop and test sustainable precision agricultural management systems that enhance environmental quality, maintain rural economies, and improve energy and economic self-sufficiency.

## GEORGE DAVIS

**FOUNDER/PARTNER PORTER CREEK VINEYARDS/WINERY, VICE PRESIDENT CALIFORNIA FARMERS UNION**



After a varied career as a newspaper photographer, boatbuilder, banana farmer in Hawaii, and social worker, George Davis began his current operation in 1978 growing winegrapes and making wine in Healdsburg California. Porter Creek Vineyards is certified Organic and Biodynamic. George's older son Alex is now the winemaker and principal farmer for the operation, while George handles the finances. He was formerly a board member and Vice President of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers CAFF and for the past ten years has served as a board member and Vice President of the California Farmers Union. He is completing his second term as an Agricultural Trade Advisor to USDA.

## TRAVIS DEPPE

**NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION MANAGER, ILLINOIS CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION**



Travis is the Nutrient Loss Reduction Manager for the Illinois Corn Growers Association. He leads Illinois Corn's water quality and sustainability initiatives focused on implementing the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy and meeting supply chain sustainability demands. By working closely with other agriculture organizations, conservation groups, agency partners and public entities, he develops and implements education, outreach, and research to help Illinois corn farmers reach their nutrient loss goals and engage in the sustainability conversation. He obtained a BS in Agriculture with a minor in Agronomy from Western Illinois University and an MS in Crop and Soil Science from Illinois State University.

## SALLY FLIS

**DIRECTOR OF AGRONOMY, THE FERTILIZER INSTITUTE (TFI)**



Sally Flis is the Director of Agronomy at TFI in Washington D.C. In her role at TFI, Sally works with the 4R Nutrient Stewardship programs to help increase the science base and understanding of on-farm practice implementation. Sally is also involved in providing science support for state and national nutrient policy issues. Before joining TFI, Sally worked with farmers in the northeastern U.S. to implement and develop nutrient management plans. Dr. Flis received her Ph.D. in Plant and Soil Science from the University of Vermont, her M.S. Dairy Science and B.S. in Dairy Science and Agronomy from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

## DAVE GUSTAFSON

**INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CONSERVATION TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION CENTER (CTIC)**



Dave Gustafson currently serves as Interim Executive Director for CTIC. His academic training was in chemical engineering (Stanford, B.S., 1980; University of Washington, Ph.D., 1983). He worked 30 years in private industry (Shell, Rhône-Poulenc, Monsanto) and then at the ILSI Research Foundation through 2016. Now an independent scientist, he leads research helping food systems meet nutrition needs in more sustainable ways. Dave's early career focused on environmental modeling agricultural impacts on water quality, and subsequently on various other sustainability issues. Beginning in 2007, Dave began leading efforts to understand climate adaptation and mitigation imperatives in the global agri-food system.

## ANNA HARMON

CANDIDATE, MASTER OF SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS 2019, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY



Anna Harmon is a master's student at Arizona State University with a focus on sustainability, policy, and agriculture. She also has nearly 10 years of professional experience as a magazine editor and writer.

## JERRY HINKLE

ECONOMIC RESEARCH COORDINATOR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, CITIZEN'S CLIMATE LOBBY



Jerry has worked as an Economist in Banking for 35 years, has a MA in Climate Policy, and has several publications in finance and in the economics of climate policy. He has given 100+ public presentations on climate change over the last 20 years and lobbied Congress for the last 12 to forward market-based solutions to the climate issue. For CCL, he has served as the Northern California Regional Coordinator for 8 years, founded and co-leads the Presenters Team, and serves on the Board of Directors. He is now on staff as the Economic Research Coordinator.

## CLAIRE JAHNS

SENIOR ADVISOR, US CLIMATE ALLIANCE, NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS INITIATIVE



Claire Jahns is a Senior Advisor to the U.S. Climate Alliance, with a focus on advancing the Natural and Working Lands Initiative and supporting states in achieving the goals of the Natural and Working Lands Challenge. Ms. Jahns most recently served as Assistant Secretary for Climate Issues at the California Natural Resources Agency under Governor Jerry Brown. Prior to this, she worked with landowners, public officials, and other partners to develop solutions at the intersection of agriculture and biodiversity conservation in California and the American West at TNC. Ms. Jahns was an economist at the Chicago Climate Exchange.

## VIRGINIA JAMESON, CA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

CLIMATE AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, DIVISION OF LAND RESOURCE PROTECTION



Virginia is a Climate and Conservation Program Manager for DOC's Division of Land Resource Protection. Virginia came to DOC with experience as a land trust employee and advocate and a degree in international affairs, natural resources, and sustainable development. She now manages teams that provide funding for ag land preservation and programs that make communities more livable with better access to fresh, healthy food. These programs encourage land-use efficiency and make California more resilient to climate change.

## GEETIKA JOSHI

SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST SUPERVISOR, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



methane reduction programs.

Geetika Joshi received Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Microbiology in New Delhi, India. Subsequently, she received a PhD in Soils and Biogeochemistry from UC Davis. She was then a post-doctoral researcher at the UC Davis Center for Regional Change, where she worked to identify barriers to community engagement for academic researchers and strategies to communicate scientific data to grassroots communities. Ms. Joshi joined CDFA in 2014 and is currently at CDFA's Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation, working on incentives programs on Climate Smart Agriculture, including the Healthy Soils Program and livestock

## BRUCE KNIGHT

PRINCIPAL AND FOUNDER, STRATEGIC CONSERVATION SOLUTIONS



Bruce Knight is a nationally recognized expert on conservation, agriculture and the environment. Knight served as Chief of Natural Resources Conservation Service from 2002-2006 - the lead federal agency for conservation on private working agricultural lands - and USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs from 2006-2009. Drawing on his experience as a former association executive, lobbyist, regulator and Capitol Hill staffer, Knight has a broad understanding of how Washington works. A third-generation rancher and farmer and lifelong conservationist, Knight operates a diversified grain and cattle operation in South Dakota using no-till and rest rotation grazing systems.

## RYAN MCCARTHY

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY ADVISOR, CALIFORNIA AIR RESOURCES BOARD



Ryan is the Science and Technology Policy Advisor to the Chair at the California Air Resources Board (CARB), a position he was appointed to by Governor Jerry Brown in 2011. He is a leader in shaping California's efforts to achieve carbon neutrality by further reducing greenhouse gas emissions, accelerating transitions to zero emission vehicles, slashing emissions of methane and other short-lived climate pollutants, and demonstrating and scaling carbon dioxide removal strategies. Ryan received his master's and doctorate degrees in civil and environmental engineering from UC Davis and bachelor's degree in structural engineering from UC San Diego.

## SHEFALI MEHTA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE SOIL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP



Dr. Shefali Mehta is an agricultural and environmental economist who focuses on improving agricultural systems to sustainably feed the world. She is the Executive Director of the Soil Health Partnership, a National Corn Growers Association program. Shefali also founded and runs Open Rivers Consulting Associates where she supports clients in tackling some of their toughest problems by finding economic- and science-based solutions. She is the CEO for Ceres Wave, an agricultural and food technology start up. She has worked in roles across private, public and non-profit sectors and serves actively on various non-profit Boards and Advisory groups. Dr. Mehta received her PhD in Agricultural and Applied Economics and MS in Statistics from the University of Minnesota, MPhil in Economics from Cambridge University and a BA in Economics from New York University.

## DEBBIE REED

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, C-AGG



Based in Washington, DC, Debbie manages and provides leadership and development for C-AGG activities and meetings. Her extensive policy expertise in agriculture, climate change and natural resources serve to guide and inform C-AGG's work in the US and abroad. Debbie's past positions in the US legislative and administrative branches and work in the UNFCCC continue to support and inform C-AGG's policy and program development. Debbie was recently appointed as the Executive Director of the Ecosystem Services Market Consortium (ESMC), an effort she has been engaged in and supporting for the past 2 years. The ESMC is developing functioning, viable ecosystem service markets for US agriculture, joined by leading US and international NGO's, companies, and experts from across the agricultural supply chain and value chain. Debbie currently serves on the Board of Directors of Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, and co-chairs their greenhouse gas metric and soil carbon metric sub-committees. She is also an Agriculture Technical Working Group expert for the Climate Bonds Initiative.

## JIM RISTAU, SD CORN GROWERS

DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY, SOUTH DAKOTA CORN GROWERS



Jim Ristau is the Director of Sustainability for SD Corn, the collective voice of NCGA and the SD Corn Utilization Council in South Dakota. His position was created in partnership with NRCS, with the purpose of communicating and improving the adoption of sustainable farming practices in SD. Many of his efforts center around improving soil health, which leads to improved farm resiliency and numerous positive environmental outcomes. He is involved in advancing several new opportunities and partnerships developed to engage SD farmers in these efforts.

## THAYER TOMLINSON

PROJECT DIRECTOR, C-AGG



Thayer manages C-AGG's project work, including communications through the newsletter and website, supports the planning, execution and follow-up associated with C-AGG meetings and workshops, and manages the USCA NWL Agriculture Toolkit project. She serves on the USCA NWL Impact Partners Secretariat as a co-lead to manage overall Impact Partner activities. For ten years, Thayer served as the Communications Director for the International Biochar Initiative. She was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Mongolia. Thayer has an MA in International Environmental Policy from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.

## HUI XU, ARGONNE NATIONAL LABORATORY

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER, ARGONNE NATIONAL LABORATORY



Dr. Hui Xu is a researcher in the Energy Systems Division at Argonne National Laboratory, USA. His research interests include modeling environmental sustainability of bioenergy feedstock production, integrated spatial land management, and life-cycle analysis of biofuels. His research integrates environmental modeling with geospatial and economic analysis to identify more efficient and sustainable natural resource management strategies. Currently working on three areas: 1) water stress impact of energy and food production, 2) bioenergy feedstock production and soil organic carbon dynamics, 3) life-cycle analysis of biofuels. He holds a PhD in Natural Resources and Environment from the University of

Michigan, Ann Arbor.