

CONNECTICUT
Land Conservation Council

2022 CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

38th Annual Connecticut Land Conservation Conference
Gather on the Land: Conversations Among Generations

Keynote Conversation – May 12 (via Zoom)

In-person plenary session – May 14 at Peoples State Forest, Barkhamsted

Roundtables – May 17, 18, & 19 (via Zoom)

May 12 – Conversations and Reflections: Taking a Look Back to Where We Are Now

Sylvie Boucher, Sandy Breslin Conservation Fellow, Connecticut Land Conservation Council

Sylvie joined the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) in August 2021 as the organization's Sandy Breslin Conservation Fellow focusing her work on CLCC's land conservation policy, advocacy, and community outreach programs. Sylvie received her B.A. in Environmental Studies with a double minor in Public Policy and Urban & Community Studies from the University of Connecticut. During her undergrad, she was a fast track graduate student with the Department of Public Policy and is continuing that track to receive a Masters of Public Administration, studying at the UConn Hartford campus. Sylvie previously worked in the Hartford area for a community-initiated urban ecology and wellness program and assisted local farmers with administration support. She enjoys spending time outdoors, reading, yoga, and cooking delicious vegan meals.

Laurie Doss, Science Department Chair, The Marvelwood School

Laurie Doss, Science Department Chair at The Marvelwood School in Kent, CT is a dedicated secondary educator who brings 35 years of experiential and authentic learning experiences to the table. She has won numerous awards throughout her career including Conservation Educator of the Year for the Northwest Conservation District in Connecticut and the Aquarion Environmental Champion of the Year for volunteering her time to significantly contribute to the improvement of environmental quality through the protection, conservation, and/or stewardship of Connecticut's natural resources. Laurie has had the privilege of mentoring several student projects via The University of Connecticut's Natural Resources Conservation Academy programs. She is a Federally Licensed Master Bander and since 2001 has operated several MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) banding stations with her students on Kent Land Trust Property. Ms. Doss first heard about Purple Martins in the mid-1980's when she was a field assistant for Dr. Charles Brown, during the early years of The Cliff Swallow Project. It took roughly 25 years before she was able to encounter her first Purple Martin near the campus of Marvelwood School. Shortly after this experience, she partnered with the Kent Land Trust, the Purple Martin Conservation Association, and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to expand housing opportunities to boost

inland populations of Martins in the northwest corner of Connecticut. Since 2011, Laurie and her students have helped the State band nestlings as part of their Natal Dispersal Study. In 2021 Laurie joined the Board of Directors for the Purple Martin Conservation Association. Ms. Doss is also on the Board of Directors for The Kent Land Trust and is the advisor to Marvelwood School's Envirothon Team.

Marianne Jorgensen, ALPINE Manager, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

Marianne currently works in the Land Conservation Programs as the coordinator for Academics for Land Protection in New England (ALPINE). ALPINE seeks to expand the role that New England academic institutions play in conserving the natural heritage of the region. This network grew out of a partnership between the Harvard Forest, Harvard University, the Highstead Foundation, and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. ALPINE helps academics connect, collaborate, and conserve through knowledge exchange and targeted activities that catalyze the pace and scale of land conservation. Prior to her work with ALPINE, Marianne worked for 16 years in the field of international education; from sending undergraduate students from US colleges and universities on study abroad programs to working with the University of the Arctic, a consortium of 120 international colleges and universities across 8 countries to promote study in the Arctic. Marianne has an MBA from Boston University and a B.A. in Botany from Connecticut College.

Justin Kaput, Environmental Science Teacher, Suffield High School

Justin grew up in a small town in north central Connecticut where tractor jams related to the annual harvest of broadleaf tobacco were an annual problem. A lifelong lover of nature, he spent his childhood days wandering through the fields, swamps, and forests behind his family's home. This passion for nature led to a degree in wildlife ecology from the University of Maine and field work in various locations including the chaparral of Southern California and the temperate rainforest of the Pacific Northwest. He continued this focus by earning a master's degree from the University of Illinois in environmental science with a focus on developing stewardship value in youth. Justin's passion for sharing nature with others lead him to a career in education where he teaches high school and college level environmental science with a focus on ecological resilience and restoration ecology. He has made it his life's work to foster ecological stewardship values in young people. He was selected as a 2018 Grosvenor Teacher Fellow and traveled to Antarctica with National Geographic and returned to work as a naturalist in the coastal rainforest of southeast Alaska. In 2021 he was selected by the NAAEE as a CEE Change Fellow and is currently working with his students to host multi school multi day youth climate empowerment events. In his spare time, he loves spending time with his family, playing and listening to music, and exploring this beautiful planet.

Grace Karam, Student, Suffield High School

Grace is a senior at Suffield High School in Suffield, CT. Seeking to protect animals and help mitigate climate change, she joined her school's Suffield Sustainability Council under the leadership of Justin Kaput. With this group, she helped host two large-scale climate summits. She also became an Associate for the Club of Rome's Global Youth Engagement Program, hosting listening sessions to gather youth opinions regarding the UN's SDGs. Grace plans to

study Sustainable Development, Geography, and International Relations at the University of St Andrews in Scotland in fall 2022. She hopes to keep fostering SDGs to help combat climate change along with social and economic injustice.

Amanda Thompson, President, East Granby Land Trust

Amanda Thompson is currently the President of the East Granby Land Trust. She has spent the last 13 years growing the East Granby Land Trust education program to incorporate annual programming with all four of the East Granby Schools, most notable of which is the High School Intern Program where students participate as board members, stewards and facilitate a 6th grade outdoor education day for the school. She also has created a Nature Camp for Parks and Rec to bring kids the many open spaces within their own town. Her most recent endeavor is working to add sustainable agriculture to the Land Trust's educational opportunities.

Jayson Velazquez, Graduate Student, Yale School of the Environment

Jayson Velazquez was born and raised in Paterson, New Jersey, and currently resides in New Haven as he wraps up his first year of the Master of Environmental Science program at Yale School of the Environment. His interests are in connecting community-based organizations based on their ability to acquire and distribute emergency resources through natural hazards and disasters. At Yale, Jayson is a Research Fellow in the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Sustainability Initiative under the direction of Dr. Dorceta Taylor where he is researching food access and security, food disparities, and food justice. Jayson is also a 2021 graduate of The Ohio State University where he earned his Bachelor of Science in Environment and Natural Resources. His undergraduate thesis addressed models for coalition building and emergency resource distribution among community-based organizations in his hometown through the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. While enrolled at Ohio State, Jayson spent two years in the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program (DDCSP) both at the University of Michigan and Yale School of the Environment where he researched the social justice implications of green infrastructure development. During his time in Connecticut, he has had the opportunity to intern with the Urban Ecology Wellness Center in Hartford, Connecticut on pilot programming to combine the benefits of mental and physical wellness with the healing and restorative power of nature. Jayson is also working with community-based organizations in New Haven to connect with graduate students who are eager to lend their time and research abilities to fill programmatic and policy gaps. He also has experience working in the smart cities space where he developed guidance for equity in vehicle electrification infrastructure in Columbus, Ohio along with urban farming in his hometown. Outside of his professional and academic life, Jayson enjoys riding his bike, playing ukulele and saxophone, and journaling!

Herb Virgo, Founder and Executive Director, Keney Park Sustainability Project

Herb Virgo is the founder and Executive Director of the Keney Park Sustainability Project (KPSP). KPSP began as a program of the Family Day Foundation, established to provide hands-on training, on-site demonstrations, outreach, and community collaborations that help families become more self-sustainable and environmentally conscious while preserving the historic Keney Park. KPSP is now the new name of the non-profit organization. Keney Park Sustainability Project currently occupies a City-owned building in Keney Park, directly adjacent to the project

site, and has a number of programs that have demonstrated strong, multifaceted connections to the affected community. KPSP has not only managed the building and its site, but leveraged partnerships across the community to build greenhouses, a community garden, a composting site, a woodworking area, and other features. Significant levels of involvement in the direction of this project have been gleaned by residents (including the youth served by the community garden site, as well as Youth Service Corps volunteers already working on-site), as well as volunteers and others. In addition, KPSP has helped to redevelop a significant portion of the trails within Keney Park, including three years of managing a State-funded trails project. Herbert Virgo has also managed the installation of 15 miles of trails in Keney Park. The project required the collaboration of multiple organization, local and state entities, volunteers and contractors. The rails project also required quarterly reporting and strict accounting procedures. The Executive Director of the Keney Park Sustainability Project, Herb Virgo, has seventeen years of experience working with the target population. He is a member of the Climate Stewardship Council and works closely with the Public Works Department in Keney Park. The Program Director has seven years of experience as the Event Coordinator for the Family Day Festival overseeing all aspects of the festival. The PD two years of experience as a PD, two years of experience as a Master Counselor and one year of experience as a Counselor Teacher. The aforementioned experience occurred at a wilderness education program for adjudicated youth. The PD has two years of experience working for the Florida Department of Children and Family Services as a Case Manager. The PD also worked as a Senior Counselor and Site Coordinator for the Leadership, Education, and Athletics in Partnership program for three years. The PD received his Bachelors in Sociology Based Human Relations from Connecticut College in 2004. In 2015 Herb Virgo received the KNOX Green Heroes award. In 2016 Herb Virgo received the Hartford Community Food Security Award. Herb Virgo was also recently featured in the Hartford Courant and on Fox 61 for creation of a mobile teaching kitchen through funding from the Whole Cities Foundation. Herb Virgo is a certified Forest Practitioner and a certified Tree Warden. Herb Virgo is a member of the Connecticut Urban Forest Council and a member of the Governor's Council on Climate Change Working and Natural Lands Working Group [WNLWG]. Herb Virgo is also the recipient of the 2021 COEEA Excellence in Environmental Stewardship Award.

Brennan Wilkins, Student, Marvelwood School

My name is Brennan Wilkins. I am a senior at the Marvelwood School. I will be going to Paul Smith's College in the fall of 2022, majoring in Fishery and Wildlife Sciences. For four years at Marvelwood, I have been helping my teacher and advisor Laurie Doss to band and study birds at the land trusts MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) banding stations in the town of Kent. I also helped her with Purple Martin banding for three years during the summers and participated in the University of Connecticut's Natural Resources Conservation. Academy Conservation Ambassador Program. My project was a StoryMap that focused on swallows and swift species in Kent, CT. I have also been a member of Marvelwood's Envirothon team for the past three years. I have been interested in nature since a very young age, and I hope to continue to study and learn as much as I can in the coming years.

May 14 – Leading the Way: Young Environmental Activists Speak Out

Paul Mailhot-Singer, Americorps Public Allies Member, Housatonic Valley Association

Paul Mailhot-Singer joined the Housatonic Valley Association last fall as an Americorps member. During his service term at HVA, Paul has conducted outreach and collaborated with partner organizations and local schools to advance and implement the Follow the Forest Initiative. Paul helped develop Follow the Forest's wildlife linkage assessment tool, which relies on community science to assess the connections between forests. Paul received his B.A. in Religious Studies from Pomona College and wrote his thesis on the preservation of sacred forests in Japan and India. In high school, he spent memorable afternoons trail running in the woods that neighbor HVA's headquarters, and Follow the Forest's mission of protecting those same woods inspired his return to the valley land.

Katharine (Kat) Morris, Founder, UConn Collaborative Organizing (UCCO)

Katharine (Kat) Morris is a 24 year old scholar-activist with her Master of Public Policy degree from the University of Connecticut. She founded UConn Collaborative Organizing (UCCO) to promote solidarity and intersectionality in social and environmental justice movements. Her TEDxUConn talk, How to Collaborate for Environmental Justice, is a call to action discussing environmental racism, health inequities, and how to organize your community using radical love and intersectionality. Kat plans to someday earn her PhD using cognitive science to strengthen collective efficacy and policy action at the intersections of environmental justice, health equity, and climate action. These days, she organizes grassroots and legislative action and speaks on various panels and podcasts, while serving on the board for CT Equity Now. Following her most recent positions as the policy intern for CT's Health Equity Solutions and Sustainability Fellow for the U.S Environmental Protection Agency, Kat is currently serving her Helen Gurley Brown Fellowship at CEEJH, the Center for Community Engagement, Environmental Justice, and Health.

Austin Serio, IT Manager, Urban Indigenous Collective

Austin is a member of the Chicoran Shakori tribe of South Carolina. As part of the Great Migration of the 60s some Shakori and other peoples of color walked away from sharecropping by migrating to the northeast "for the good union jobs". Growing up as a Two-Spirit urban native in the Simsbury area of Hartford Austin has found himself at powerful intersections between the forces of Technology and Globalization. During and after pursuing his degree in Technology and Globalization at NYU Gallatin Austin continued to enhance his Product Design skills as the Chicoran Shakori Tribal Web Developer and the Lead Product Designer at Up2Code ZED Aerospace and Blue World Inc. While pursuing his degree at Gallatin Austin worked for Apple at one of their HQ locations and observed the structural changes presently roiling the global economy firsthand. Finding himself at another powerful global crossroads Austin is currently focused on the intersections between Indigenous communities Sustainability and Product Design.

Ashley Stewart, Environmental Consultant, Stewart Environmental and Equity Consulting

Ashley Stewart is a Connecticut native that has dedicated her career to improving the environmental and social condition of Black urban communities in the State. Ashley is an environmental engineer, municipal equity coach, facilitator, environmental sociology researcher, and project management consultant. Ashley earned her B.S. in civil engineering from Temple University, and her master's degree from Yale University's School of the Environment. Her diverse career has helped to shape her view that the environment for Black community is more than nature and wildlife, but incorporates access to jobs, resources, transportation, and racialized terror. In her career she has managed large-scale construction projects that have enhanced our natural environment, developed equity learning resources for Connecticut non-profits, facilitated dialogues across a wide range of topics, aided municipal and non-profit organizations in building understanding of environmental inequity in Connecticut and cultivated deep relationships across the state with community stakeholders. Through her consulting company, Stewart Environmental and Equity Consulting (SEEC), Ashley has continued her research focuses on the effects of environmental policy on marginalized communities and the role residents have in forming their own environmental protection. SEEC also supports nonprofits and municipalities in incorporating community in designing sustainable solutions across land use decisions, resilience investment and sustainability programming. Ashley is a distinguished Switzer Fellow and an Outdoor Afro Leader in Connecticut. She is a board member of the Connecticut Green Building Council (CTGBC). Ashley is an avid reader that loves biking and gardening.

Sena Wazer, Climate Activist, University of Connecticut '22

Sena Wazer is an 18 year old climate activist from Mansfield, CT. In 2021 Sena was named a Truman Scholar, and this May she graduated from the University of Connecticut with a BA in Environmental Studies. As a climate activist Sena has organized and spoken at large demonstrations, youth lobby days, and other climate action related events. She also chaired a subcommittee on the Governor's Council on Climate Change. Moving forward Sena plans to work full time on climate action through policy and government.

Nate Welsh, Student Intern, East Granby Land Trust

Nate Welsh is a high school senior who has spent the last two years serving as an intern for his local land trust, the East Granby Land Trust. He will be attending Williams College in the fall where he plans to further pursue his interests in land management, environmental justice, and ethics.

May 17 – Creating a Welcoming Experience on the Land for All**Tasha Daniels, Park Ranger, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Tasha Daniels is a Park Ranger at the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. She has worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for fourteen years. She works primarily on environmental education projects and programs throughout the Connecticut River watershed. She works actively with partners, stakeholders, communities' leaders, and nonprofit organizations to shed light on environmental issues within the watershed. Tasha enjoys

choosing nature theme books for the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail's Storybook Trail program.

Chris Donnelly, Urban Forester (Retired), CT DEEP Forestry

Chris Donnelly, is an urban forester living in Northford, CT. He retired from CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, where he worked as the state's Urban Forestry Coordinator from 1998 until 2020. In this position, he worked with partners in the cities and towns throughout the state, seeking to promote the urban forest through urban forestry efforts at the local level. The most rewarding aspect of this job, Chris reports, was in seeing people and trees come together, as people came more and more to appreciate trees, especially trees near to home, for the essential role they play in modern life. Chris is a graduate of Yale College, BS biology 1975 and the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Masters of Forest Science, 1985.

Lazendra Hairston-Barton, Environmental Biologist Coordinator, Arkansas Game & Fish Commission

Lazendra Hairston-Barton was Kentucky born, but Arkansas raised. In 1998, she obtained her Bachelors of Science degree in Fisheries Biology from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). While attending UAPB she was fortunate to work two years with USDA-Agriculture Research Services learning about catfish cultivation and water quality management. This work led her to become a student research assistant with the UAPB Fish Health Laboratory where she lead laboratory operations upon graduation. She spent one year of study at the University of Washington before returning back to Arkansas to work on her Master of Science degree in Aquaculture/Fisheries at UAPB. Her research focused on the study of the Resistance of Genetically Modified Catfish to *Edwardsiella ictaluri*. Upon finishing her studies with this research she went on to work as a Research Assistant in Regulatory Science working on Swine Waste Treatment Lagoons. She moved on to the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences to work with the Cell Therapy Laboratory as a special processing technician processing cancer patients stems cells for preservation for future treatment. From there she spent 8 years with the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality as a biologist and ecologist, conducting water quality studies and heading the in-state review of projects that make impacts to waters of the state. She is currently employed with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC), as the agency's Environmental Biologist Coordinator. Lazendra has worked with the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Minorities in Natural Resources Committee. She is actively involved with the AGFC Community Fishing Program, which gives her the opportunity to interact with minority communities and talk to them about all the opportunities there are in natural resources. On top of her outreach work with AGFC, she also works with her church Children's Ministry and local women's shelter. When she isn't volunteering she, along with her husband, has an event planning and vending businesses. She is a mother of three adult daughters and one teenage son.

Holly Lalime, Environmental Analyst, Connecticut Department of Agriculture

Holly Lalime (she/her) is an Environmental Analyst in the Bureau of Agricultural Development and Resource Conservation at the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Within this role,

Holly provides project administration for the Farmland Preservation Program. In 2021, the Farmland Preservation Program permanently protected 13 farms spanning 1, 204 acres. She is also involved in issues surrounding farmland access and provides outreach and assistance to land owners and land seekers through the Connecticut FarmLink Program. Holly graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Wildlife Biology from the University of Vermont. After graduation, Holly worked as a vegetable farmer in Vermont, Connecticut and Hawaii. She has been with the Department of Agriculture since 2020. Holly grew up in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont and in her free time enjoys spending time in nature with her husband and beloved dog Bob.

Mercy Quaye, Founder, President, The Narrative Project

Mercy has built a storied career in journalism, communications, and public relations in New Haven and statewide for more than a decade. After working in the public and non-profit sectors, spearheading communications strategies in a variety of industries, she launched The Narrative Project to offer high-quality communications for organizations who seek to do good in the world. After leaving a formal career in Journalism, Mercy began working in mission-driven communications for public and non-profit organizations focusing on equitable education, undocumented students' rights and more. She's also spent time working in public relations as the Managing Director of External Affairs with Educators for Excellence, the Director of Communications with New Haven Public Schools, and as a Communications Associate with the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now. At the core of everything she does is a deeply seeded desire to effect positive social change through collaboration and highlighting lesser-discussed aspects of the Black and American experiences. The daughter of a Ghanaian immigrant on one side and a first-generation college student on the other, Mercy's relationship to justice through storytelling and exposure was born shortly after moving from low-income housing in Newhallville to the West River neighborhood — a Westville adjacent community with the promise of opportunity, but far fewer resources than it required. A self-proclaimed "inner-city kid who went to college," Mercy's perspective on life has been shaped through a number of experiences including: converting from Christianity to Islam to agnosticism; joining a historically Black sorority at a predominately white university; section hiking the Appalachian Trail and having a brief stint in the outdoor industry; having an oddly in-depth interest in astrophysics; being in an interracial marriage with a former Wyomingite from a conservative family, and a convergence of countless other random happenings. She's a professor of digital journalism at Southern Connecticut State University, the Vice President for Communications with the Connecticut Society of Professional Journalists, and a columnist with Hearst Connecticut Media. Her column Subtext offers readers a lesser-examined perspective on well-known topics and delves into the potential ripple effects of any given issue. She obtained a Bachelors in Journalism and a Masters in Public Relations from Quinnipiac University.

May 18 – Conservation Education: Empowering Students to Help Our Planet

Bryan Avery, Americorps Public Allies Member, CT Forest & Park Association

Bryan grew up in south central Massachusetts and now lives a bit over the border in northern Connecticut with his toddler. He has a BA in Geology from Hartwick College and a MS in Parks

and Natural Resource Management from Slippery Rock University. He has over 10 years of experience educating kids, teachers, and the public about STEM and the outdoors with multiple non-profits. Bryan is a collaborative and creative thinker who enjoys bringing people together to solve complex problems. He enjoys playing lots of disc golf, canoeing, growing bonsai trees, and practicing bird identification and calls with his son. Bryan is currently serving as a Public Allies AmeriCorps Service Member with The Connecticut Forest and Park Association and will be on the job market soon.

Laura Cisneros, Assistant Extension Professor, UConn Department of Natural Resources and the Environment & Institute of the Environment

Laura Cisneros (she/her) is an Assistant Extension Professor in the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment & Institute of the Environment at UConn. She received a B.S. in Zoology at Michigan State University, and a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Connecticut. Currently, Laura is the Director of UConn's Natural Resources Conservation Academy, through which she develops and implements place-based, environmental action programs that integrate technology used by professionals and support intergenerational (e.g., teen & adult teams) community conservation projects. Her recent efforts with the NRCA are geared towards making NRCA programs more culturally relevant, and using equitable, inclusive, and authentic community engagement practices. Her associated research efforts center on understanding how environmental action programs and community science impact capacity to address environmental issues. Through Laura's leadership, the NRCA has received 9 award recognitions, and Laura is currently a CEE-Change Fellow with the North American Association for Environmental Education.

Leticia Colon de Mejias, Chair of Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs, CT Commission on Women Children Elderly Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs

Leticia is the Co-Chair of the nonprofit Efficiency For All, Policy Co-Chair of the National Building Performance Association, Chair of Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs on the Commission for the state of Connecticut Commission on Women Children Elderly Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs, She is the Founder the nonprofit Green Eco Warriors which takes action based approaches to Creating a Culture of Sustainable Thinkers™. She is a federally appointed NEJAC member. Her published award-winning books focus on life lessons and environmental leadership, sustainability, climate action and energy equity. She has written a line of comic books and educational science based graphic texts which feature a cast of diverse superheroes and align with national science standards (NGSS). She is the recipient of many national awards, including the United States of America's Department of Energy Award for work with at-risk and minority populations, National Award Building Scientist Hall of Fame, Minority Small Business of the year award, National Department of Education award, for her workforce programs. She is a two time employer of the Year and a national SBA winner. Her companies have provided energy efficiency assessments and upgrades to over 14,000 CT households and completed full energy efficiency retrofits in over 10 million square feet of multifamily housing. In 2021 she was a TEDXSpeaker on – Creating a Culture of Sustainable Thinkers. Prior to her work in energy and equity, Leticia worked for 16 years at Hartford Hospital. During her tenure at HHC, she developed the medical mentor program, and the nationally awarded workforce development

program Y.E.S. She helped hundreds of workers complete GED's, college, and supported their growth into leadership roles. Currently, Leticia is working on Creating a Culture of Sustainable Thinkers™ by lifting communities through exposure to new ways of thinking that connect them to nature, lower pollution, and create agency, prosperity, while sparking positive action. Leticia deeply desires for all people to see their interconnectedness to the planet which sustains us all.

Dennis Liu, Vice President of Education, E.O. Wilson Foundation

Dennis Liu is Vice President for Education of the E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation and the Half-Earth Project. The Education Initiatives he leads are aimed at a broad range of students and teachers and the general public interested in learning more about how to conserve all of the beautiful species on our precious planet. We should care about nature for the obvious pleasure it brings us but also because our very survival as a species depends on intact nature. Dennis trained in neuroscience and molecular genetics and was faculty in the department of genetics at the University of Washington. He left bench research to focus particularly on media and film for science education, working with Videodiscovery, Microsoft, and then the Howard Hughes Medical Institute where he founded the BioInteractive educational media division and then led Tangled Bank Studios producing science documentaries for television and big screens. Dennis likes hiking and kayaking and being out in nature, in particular for spotting birds and dragonflies, and the occasional turtle.

Susan Quincy, Environmental Educator, CT DEEP Kellogg Environmental Education Center

May 19 – Climate Solutions: Combining Urban and Rural Conservation Efforts

Alanis Allen, Research Analyst, CT DEEP Office of Climate Planning

Alanis is a Research Analyst in the Office of Climate Planning at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). Originally born and raised in Brooklyn, New York she moved to Connecticut for college, where she studied climate change, environmental justice and public health. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Economics from Yale University. After graduating, she found her current position at DEEP where she works on various climate change-related projects and programs including the Governor's Council on Climate Change and the newly formed Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council.

Jaysa Hunter-Mellers, Student Environmental Activist, Young Voices for the Planet

Shawn Joseph, Co-Founder, Park City Harvest

Starting his gardening journey at the young age of 7 Shawn developed his love and passion for all things plants very early. Over the years he sharpened his skills growing a variety of plants in many different ways and learned how they interact with each other and the surrounding environment. This curiosity of plant propagation continued as he pursued and attained his degree in horticulture at Naugatuck Valley Community College. As a horticulturist Shawn currently spends his days farming and volunteering his time to help others learn the ways of

organic gardening and providing healthy options all while gaining patience and appreciation for the natural world we live in.

Julia Rogers, Senior Land Protection Manager, Housatonic Valley Association

Julia joined HVA in October 2021, as Senior Land Protection Manager, where she works with partners throughout the region to advance conservation projects and the Follow the Forest Initiative. She holds a B.A. in biology from Colby College, and has an M.S. in natural resources and the environment from the University of Connecticut. Julia has worked with land trusts in south-central Pennsylvania, northeastern Connecticut, and most recently the Hudson Valley of New York. She also has extensive research experience – working on projects relating to invasive species, non-native earthworms, and tropical rainforest restoration. She loves being outside and can be found whitewater canoeing and kayaking, hiking, trail running or cross country skiing.

Andrea Urbano, Service Forester, CT DEEP Forestry

Andrea Urbano is a Service Forester for Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. As such, she supports and provides technical assistance, education, and outreach to woodland owners throughout New Haven, Middlesex, and Hartford counties. She received a Bachelor of Science from the University of New Hampshire in environmental conservation and political science. Her Master of Science in forestry was earned from the University of Vermont, where she researched climate science, carbon forestry, and their relationship to land-use history and forest management. She has since published her research (Urbano and Keeton 2017) and devoted her professional and personal life to the sustainable use of natural resources.

Sophi Veltrop, Outreach Manager, Northeast Wilderness Trust

Sophi Veltrop serves as the Outreach Manager at Northeast Wilderness Trust. She received her B.S. in Environmental Science from Washington University in St. Louis in 2013. Sophi has worked for Vermont Land Trust, Yestermorrow Design/Build School, and Earthwalk Vermont. She is motivated in her work by the vision of a world where all species have the chance to survive, thrive, and evolve. Outside of work, she can be found roaming forests and rivers with her dog, tending a garden, and cultivating community and creative practice.

Louise Washer, Executive Board Member, Pollinator Pathway

Louise Washer serves on the board of the Pollinator Pathway, which she helped create in 2017, and which has since spread to over 300 towns across the 9 states. She also serves as president of the Norwalk River Watershed Association, as a member of the Norwalk Mayor's Water Quality Committee, and on the steering committee of the Hudson-to-Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H).