

# CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

## 2023 Presenters' Biographies

**Keith R. Ainsworth, Managing Member, Law Offices of Keith R. Ainsworth, Esq., LLC**— Keith Ainsworth has been an environmental and land use litigator for over three decades. He has a broad conservation-based practice representing land trusts, non-profits, land owners and businesses in transactions and litigation throughout Connecticut before administrative agencies and state and federal courts. As former chair of the CT Bar Association Environmental Law section, Acting Chair of the CT Council on Environmental Quality and a municipal first selectman (Haddam), Keith has perspective from several sides of the table. A graduate of Tufts with a B.S. in biology, environmental studies and English literature, Keith brings a scientific and analytical background to the law. Keith is a life member of the Madison Land Conservation Trust and served on the national leadership council of Trout Unlimited. Keith is also an avid outdoorsman and the author of several volumes of poetry.

**David Allen, Principal Consultant, Development for Conservation** — David Allen is a non-profit fund development consultant who works almost exclusively with land trusts and other conservation organizations. Under the business name Development for Conservation, David works with nonprofit conservation boards to help their members advance as leaders and advocates. David's background includes 30 years in membership fundraising, major gift development, capital campaigns, and marketing. He worked about half that time for Nature Conservancy (TNC) chapters in Oregon, Texas, and Wisconsin and served TNC nationally as an internal fundraising consultant and major gift development trainer. And in 2009, he launched Development for Conservation full-time. Also in 2009, David partnered with Nancy Moore to form Conservation Consulting Group. Together they work with land trusts on Strategic Planning, board development and training, and governance. David is a strategic thinker, problem solver, facilitator, educator, and program developer who brings a particular passion for conservation and the environment. David has worked with more than 150 conservation organizations across the country and is currently consulting with land trusts in seven states. David is a skilled teacher and a frequent presenter at conservation conferences, including the CLCC Conference.

**Judy Anderson, Principal, Community Consultants**— Judy Anderson of Community Consultants, LLC has worked in the land trust sector for over 35 years. She focuses on inclusive conservation, enhancing a welcoming organizational culture, and strengthening land trusts' ability to withstand the test of time. She currently assists nonprofit organizations on practical strategic conservation initiatives incorporating local communities, community engagement, agrivoltaics, and community-based fundraising and communication strategies. Prior to her work as a consultant, Judy served as the Executive Director of the Columbia Land Conservancy.

**Ann Astarita, Executive Director, Roxbury Land Trust** – Ann Astarita is an environmental professional with over 25 years of experience working in areas ranging from environmental consulting to wetlands enforcement, conservation education to community organizing. Ann holds an M.S. in Environmental Science from the University of New Haven where she was a research assistant while working as an environmental paralegal. As the Executive Director of Roxbury Land Trust for over six years, she expanded meadow and pollinator habitats, school programs, and bolstered land management policies. She and her husband Steve have two wonderful sons, a fantastic daughter-in-law, and two dogs keeping them active and on the trails.

**Robert Beach, President, Joshua's Trust** — A graduate of Yale College and the University of Virginia School of Law, Rob clerked for Connecticut's Chief Justice, served as an Assistant State's Attorney in the Chief State's Attorney's Office, practiced trial law, and was appointed to the Connecticut Superior Court in 1996 and the Connecticut Appellate Court in 2007. He retired in 2021. He has served on a number of boards and is currently president of Joshua's Trust. He wishes to leave to his grandchildren a pleasant and rational world.

**David Beers, Western Connecticut Service Forester, CT DEEP** — Dave is the Service Forester for Western Connecticut where he provides forestry advice and assistance to private and municipal owners of forestland. Prior to that, he worked as a consulting forester in western Connecticut for 22 years. Since starting offering the phone mapping workshop two years ago, he has seen quite a demand for learning phone mapping.

**Sean Bennett, Senior Sales Director, Decian, Inc.** — Sean Bennett is a 16-year Veteran Officer of the U.S Coast Guard. He graduated from the Coast Guard Academy with his B.S. degree in 1997 and graduated in September of 2021 with an M.S. degree in Innovation from Northeastern University in Boston. Sean is a natural leader with more than 15 years of business development and entrepreneurship experience. He is currently the Senior Sales Director at Decian, Inc, a managed Information Technology (IT) service provider headquartered in Portland, CT. Sean has more than 14 years combined experience in IT products and services sales, along with software license and integration sales. Sean has assisted more than 200 small and medium sized businesses transition IT support to Decian and is well versed in the technology-related business needs that are most relevant today.

**Frank Belknap, Member, Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG)**

**Katie Blake, Conservationist, Highstead** — As a trained Conservation Biologist, Katie has over 20 years of experience in landscape ecology, environmental outreach, conservation planning, and scientific research. In her role as Conservationist at Highstead, Katie supports RCPs across the Northeast in their efforts to increase the pace and scale of conservation by way of capacity building, network coordination, and leadership of various landscape-scale initiatives. Katie holds a Master's degree in Conservation Biology from Antioch University New England and a B.A. in Environmental Studies from Mount Holyoke College. At home, Katie delights in tending to her homestead with her husband Jeremy and daughters Tziporah and Tahlia.

**Amanda Branson, Executive Director, Naromi Land Trust** — Amanda Branson is the director of operations and finance at Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy where she oversees business operations and planning, as well as the partnership program of NCLC. NCLC is the largest land trust in Connecticut, protecting 12,500 acres (and growing) of vast, connected natural areas. NCLC's conserved lands include 21 public hiking preserves, 40 working farms, and over 3,000 acres of habitat for rare and endangered species. Amanda was formerly the executive director of Naromi Land Trust in Sherman, CT. As Naromi's first executive director, Amanda led the organization through accreditation in 2018 and 2020 merger with Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust. Amanda also led all of Naromi's numerous stewardship initiatives and all acquisition projects completed between 2016 and 2019. Amanda is co-chair of Connecticut Land Conservation Council's Accredited Land Trusts working group; and co-chair of SALT (Small Area Land Trusts), a consortium of conservation organizations in Litchfield and northern Fairfield counties.

**Jim Brinton, First Selectman, Town of Washington** — Jim Brinton was born and raised in Washington and has worked in town his entire adult life. Having worked in town for nearly 35 years has allowed me to meet and understand our very diverse citizenry. People love Washington for its character, cultural offerings, dedication to our open space and natural resources as well as our strong sense of community and volunteerism. His goal is to protect those values that are so important to all of us while moving Washington forward.

**Michael Callahan, President, Beaver Institute, Inc.** — Mike Callahan has worked to promote coexistence with beavers since 1998. He has installed over 1,900 successful flow devices in New England with his company Beaver Solutions LLC. He started the Beaver Management Forum Discussion Group on Facebook that has approximately 3,000 members. In 2017 he founded the nonprofit Beaver Institute, Inc. to promote beaver coexistence across North America. His duties as President of the Beaver Institute include training BeaverCorps professionals across North America. He is also developing and overseeing multiple coexistence programs including landowner flow device incentive grants, a Climate Change Coalition, the BeaverCON conferences, and a national Beaver BioBank Program. In his spare time he loves the outdoors, reading, spiritual pursuits, the New England Patriots, and spending time with friends and family.

**Christopher Cane, Graduate Student, Department of Natural Resources & the Environment, University of Connecticut** — Christopher Cane (he/him, they/them) is a graduate student and research assistant pursuing a MS in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and the Environment at UConn. He currently is a graduate assistant with the NRCA Conservation Ambassador Program and Difference Maker Mentor Program. Chris previously worked as an environmental educator with Common Ground High School and New Haven Ecology Project, and served as a FoodCorps service-member with Green Village Initiative.

**Alex Cardoso, Student, East Granby High School; Board Member, East Granby Land Trust** — Alex Cardoso is a junior at East Granby High school. Alex grew up spending time in the woods and would like to see those same woods be preserved, which led to interest in the East Granby Land Trust. Alex also has 8 pets, which include 6 cats and 2 dogs.

**Frank Cervo, Eastern District Service Forester, CT DEEP Forestry** — Frank Cervo is the Eastern District Service Forester with the Connecticut DEEP Division of Forestry. He holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of Connecticut and a Master of Forestry from Yale University. Prior to his current position, Frank was the Forest Manager for Yale University. He loves hiking, backpacking, reading, and cutting firewood.

**Laura Cisneros, Assistant Extension Professor, UConn Department of Natural Resources and the Environment & Institute of the Environment** — Laura Cisneros (she/her/ella) is an Assistant Extension Professor in the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment & Institute of the Environment at UConn. Currently, Laura directs UConn's Natural Resources Conservation Academy (NRCA), 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. In 2021, Laura was selected to be a CEE-Change Fellow with the North American Association for Environmental Education.

**Sue Cope, Consultant, Save CT Land, LLC** — Sue Cope is the Consultant and Founder for Save CT Land, LLC - an independent consulting firm dedicated to helping Connecticut conservation groups further their missions of protecting land across the state. Born and raised in Connecticut, Sue has an undergraduate degree in Natural Resource Management and Engineering from UConn where she focused on Wildlife Management, and a graduate degree in Environmental Communications from Ball State University where she focused on Sustainability and Documentary Filmmaking. In her most recent position as the former Environmental Director for the Lyme Land Conservation Trust, Sue oversaw stewardship of 110+ parcels across Lyme, working hand-in-hand with volunteers, landowners, neighbors, and town officials, to ensure that Lyme continued to carry out its mission of land preservation and conservation in perpetuity. Her ultimate goal aims to reduce the stigma of easement management and ownership, create stronger regional partnerships, and engage more Connecticut communities in conservation on a local level.

**Sharon Danosky, President, Danosky & Associates** — Sharon Danosky is a strategist who partners with nonprofit organizations to build organizational capacity. With over 35 years of experience working with nonprofit organizations, Sharon knows how to drive change and achieve results, re-igniting boards with a sense of purpose, while building sustainable fundraising programs that achieve double-digit increases. Sharon brings a hands-on approach that gives her clients the tools that work and instills them with the confidence to succeed. Sharon is a BoardSource Certified Governance Trainer, and a member of the Land Trust Alliance and Connecticut Land Conservation Council. She has extensive experience working with environmental organizations and land trust throughout the region.

**Yaw Darko, Senior Project Specialist, Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC)** — Yaw joined CLCC in August 2020 as the organization's second Sandy Breslin Conservation Fellow. Nearing the end of his one year fellowship, he was promoted to CLCC's first Project Specialist. He administers CLCC's grant programs and provides support across a spectrum of land conservation issues and projects. Yaw received his B.A. in Psychology and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Connecticut (UConn). With a passion for learning, Yaw has a background in farming, personal training, tutoring/counseling, and facilities maintenance. He enjoys reading and writing poetry, gardening, lifting weights, birding, and playing soccer.

**Victor DeMasi, Curatorial Affiliate, Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History** — Victor DeMasi is an extremely active member of The Pollinator Pathway. He was a wetland conservation officer in his hometown of Redding for 20 years and is presently a curatorial affiliate at the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History in New Haven. He busies himself with preserving open space in town and preserving butterflies in the museum. His field work with butterflies contributed almost a thousand citations to the recently published Connecticut Butterfly Atlas. He has contributed articles to scientific publications and his mark-recapture studies with Swallowtail butterflies was recently cited in the book *Swallowtails of the Americas*. During the Pandemic he is doing a pollinator survey of two meadows in Redding CT. Recent butterfly study trips with his spouse Roanna, a photographer have been several times to Amazon forest in Guyana, Nicaragua, and yearly studies in montane California assessing the impact of climate change on that fauna. His work in South America was recently featured in *The Yale Environmental News*. Victor DeMasi is also a 40-year owner of Monarch Painting, a decorative painting firm in Redding, Connecticut, which specializes in faux finishes and trompe l'oeil. His murals often feature natural history subjects such as native wildflowers and butterflies. Clients delight in a Monarch butterfly painted sitting on top of a window frame in an unlikely corner of their house. Metamorphosis is my business.

**Kathleen Doherty, Senior Conservation Manager, Connecticut Farmland Trust** — Kathleen Doherty is the Senior Conservation Manager for Connecticut Farmland Trust, a statewide agricultural land trust. Growing up in New England, Kathleen always admired the beauty of our local landscape. With a background in regional planning, she came to understand that land is the basis of our lives and livelihoods. After finishing college and earning a Master's in Regional Planning from UMass-Amherst, Kathleen transitioned to a career in land conservation. She completed a year of AmeriCorps service at Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust in Massachusetts, then worked at a regional land trust in New Hampshire before joining the team at CFT. She loves working with farmers and landowners to ensure their land will always be available for farming. In her spare time, Kathleen loves cooking with local vegetables and hiking around New England with her husband and their dog.

**Aaron Downend, CEO/Founder, Firebear Security** — Aaron Downend is a Cyber Security professional with 20 years' experience in Information Security and technology. He is an experienced executive with a demonstrated history of working in the information security, information technology and services industry. He is also skilled in leadership, Cyber-security, Software as a Service (SaaS), Business Intelligence, and risk management.

**Sophie Ehrhardt, Carbon Specialist, Northeast Wilderness Trust** — Sophie Ehrhardt (Carbon Specialist) coordinates Northeast Wilderness Trust's Wild Carbon projects. Her desire to be involved with protecting the forests and waters of the Northeast for all the species who reside there, and to play a role addressing the challenges of climate change, made Northeast Wilderness Trust a natural work habitat for her. Sophie has a Bachelor's degree in Classics from St. John's College and a Master's degree in Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School. In her free time Sophie enjoys paddling, walking among trees, and spying on birds.

**Eileen Fielding, Center Director, Sharon Audubon Center, Audubon Connecticut** — Eileen Fielding is the Director of the Sharon Audubon Center. Sharon Audubon is the home base of Audubon's Healthy Forest Initiative in CT, which aims to enhance habitat for forest birds across the state by engaging foresters, landowners, and community members in the effort. Eileen and other Audubon staff provide bird habitat assessments for land trusts and landowners, and workshops for foresters about bird-friendly silvicultural techniques, and forest management plans. She holds a PhD in Ecology and has taught conservation-related courses in several colleges and universities.

**James (Jim) Finch, Finance Director, Town of Branford** — Jim was hired as Branford's Finance Director in 1998. Previously he served five years as the Director of Management and Budget for the City of Norwalk. Jim also worked for six years in the City of New Haven's Controller's Office. Jim is a past New England States Government Finance Officers Association President (NESGFOA) and is a member of the CT GFOA. Jim worked extensively with State Senator Christine Cohen to draft PA 19-77 "An Act authorizing Municipal Climate Change and Coastal Resiliency Reserve Funds" which was signed into law by Governor Ned Lamont on July 1, 2019. Jim holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Seton Hall University.

**Andy Fisk, Bureau Chief, Natural Resources, CT DEEP** — Andy began working for the CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection in October 2022. He has worked in public service throughout New England since 1997 after receiving his graduate degrees from Rutgers University in land use planning, public policy, and environmental science. He worked for the State of Maine for 13 years at the Land Use Regulation Commission and the Departments of Marine Resources and Environmental Protection. His last position was running the Bureau of Land & Water Quality. He has chaired the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission and the national Association of Clean Water Agencies and testified twice in Congress during his tenure in Maine. He was board member and Chair of the regional Kennebec Land Trust when they hired their first paid staff and initiated the now long-running Kennebec Woodlands Partnership. Andy led the transformation of the Connecticut River Conservancy (rebranded from the Connecticut River Watershed Council in 2017) since 2011, serving as their Executive Director. The organization has tripled in size under his tenure and expanded programs in restoration, advocacy, community science, and recreation throughout the four-state watershed. Andy is currently a public member and chair of the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission as well as chair of the Norcross Wildlife Foundation. He serves on the Advisory Board to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority as a gubernatorial appointee representing the Connecticut River watershed.

**Diana Fiske, President, Friends of Whalebone Cove** — Diana Fiske was a founding member in 2016 of the Friends of Whalebone Cove, a grassroots environmental organization whose mission is to protect and preserve the ecological integrity of Whalebone Cove and its surroundings. She has served as secretary, and most recently as president for the past 4 years. During warmer weather she is likely to be seen in a kayak with other volunteers surveying, pulling, and removing invasive water chestnut or yellow Flag iris, or cutting Japanese knotweed at a test site she oversees on the banks of Whalebone Creek. Diana is also busy locally as a member of the Lyme Land Trust's Events & Education Committee, Lyme's SustainableCT certification committee, the Lyme Pollinator Pathway, and the St. Ann's Episcopal Church Environment Committee, co-chairing the church's growing pollinator/native gardens throughout the campus. She has been passionate about all things natural since growing up on a dairy farm in Sussex, England, joining garden clubs and volunteering as an enthusiastic weeder in various hometowns as an adult, and gaining her Master Gardener certification from UConn in 2012. She started Nixing Knotweed in partnership with Courtney MacDonald at their shared summer community at the shore in 2021.

**Brian Florek, Chief Surveyor, CT DEEP** — Brian Florek is a Licensed Land Surveyor and is the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Supervisor of Surveys and Mapping. Brian has worked at DEEP for 16 years, where approximately 265,000 acres of Open Space are under his direct purview. Brian is responsible for abating numerous encroachments and is the final approval for DEEP property transactions prior to the Attorney General's Office. Brian is also the custodian of all the DEEP land records associated with these properties. Brian is DEEP's Land Expert for all Litigations and has repeatedly testified in court on DEEP's behalf. Brian is referred to as the "State Surveyor." Brian is the Public Sector Council for the Connecticut Association of Land Surveyors, on the Waterford Land Trust Board of Directors, and on the Connecticut Geographic Naming Committee. Brian is also an avid surf caster and loves to be outdoors tromping through the woods. Just don't ask him where his favorite fishing spots are located!

**Linda P. Francois, Esq., Partner, Cooper, Whitney & Francois** — Attorney Francois received her undergraduate degree from the University of Connecticut as an honors scholar and her Juris Doctor with honors from the University of Connecticut. Her practice includes property law, closings, wills, trusts and probate, personal injury, collections, foreclosures, and evictions. Ms. Francois' real estate practice includes a focus on natural and working lands preservation. She has represented landowners, land trusts and municipalities in land protection transactions, conservation restriction (easement) donations, bargain sales and purchases, and open space initiatives throughout Connecticut. Ms. Francois is the 2008 recipient of the Working Lands Alliance Farmland Preservation Pathfinder Award, 2003 Secretary of State's Public Service Award, the 2005 Bethany Citizen of the Year Award and 1998 Bethany Conservationist of the Year Award. For over fifteen years, she has been a director and president of the Bethany Land Trust, Inc., and a director and officer of the Bethany Horsemen, Inc. riding organization

**Nicole Freidenfelds, Assistant Extension Educator, Department of Natural Resources & the Environment, University of Connecticut** — Nicole Freidenfelds (she/her) is a former research scientist and high school science teacher. She

previously coordinated the UConn Natural Resources Conservation Academy's Conservation Training Partnerships, an environmental education program that connected intergenerational (teen-adult) teams to natural resource science and geospatial technology through workshops and participant-driven local conservation projects. She is currently overseeing the NRCA's new NSF-funded Eco-Digital Storytellers program, which engages student-teacher teams in environmental storytelling through digital media.

**Sigrun Gadwa, Conservation & Ecology Committee Chair, Connecticut Botanical Society** — As a plant ecologist Ms. Gadwa inventories, assesses, photographs, and monitors ecological communities, often in support of open space acquisition initiatives. She plans & guides control programs for invasive plants, and searches for listed plant and turtle populations and assesses their habitat. Botanical specialties include vascular plant identification and winter botany. As a wetland and soil scientist, she assesses functions & values, delineates wetland and watercourse jurisdictional boundaries (CT and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), plans & supervises wetland mitigation and restoration. She performs vernal pool studies, water quality testing and data analysis, and in-stream bio-assessments. Her effective third-party reviews of development projects draw on this expertise.

**Leah Gichuru, Undergraduate Student, Molecular and Cell Biology, University of Connecticut** — Leah Gichuru (she/her/hers) is an undergraduate student at UConn pursuing a degree in Molecular and Cell Biology with a minor in Spanish. Leah is currently a Difference Maker Mentor for the UConn Natural Resource Conservation Academy, and a tutor for Natchaug Elementary School students in their after school program. Leah also has held the position as a facilitator for the Anti-Racism forum event for educators hosted by UConn. She intends on utilizing her academic and work experience towards her career to address racial disparities and implement equity and inclusion within the education and healthcare systems.

**Adam Goodman, Land Protection Specialist, Aspetuck Land Trust** — Adam Goodman is Aspetuck Land Trust's Land Protection Specialist. His love for the outdoors focused his studies on earth sciences where he achieved a BS in Geology from Union College and a MS in Earth Sciences from Syracuse University. Formerly an environmental consultant with extensive experience in soil and groundwater investigations, his passion for understanding the physical landscape and desire to protect open space brought him to the Aspetuck Land Trust first as a volunteer in 2013 and then as their Land Protection Specialist in 2021. Adam also enjoys serving on the Town of Fairfield's Land Acquisition Commission, on the board of Friends of Sherwood Island State Park, and he competes as a professional disc golfer.

**Kyle Gray, Programs and Engagement Manager, Throwe Environmental, LLC** — Kyle Gray is Manager, Programs and Engagement for Throwe Environmental. Kyle manages and oversees the company's full range of climate resilience and financing projects. Kyle has led and supported climate resilience planning and investment efforts across the East Coast and nationally, including as a Field Liaison for the National Coastal Resilience Fund and Long Island Sound Futures Fund. Kyle has a M.A in Marine Affairs and a Postbaccalaureate Certificate in Community Planning from the University of Rhode Island. Kyle is a certified Climate Change Professional (CC-P®) and diversity and inclusion facilitator.

**Courtney Greene, Policy Analyst, Throwe Environmental** — Courtney Greene is a Policy Analyst for Throwe Environmental and currently manages Throwe's work on the National Coastal Resilience Fund, the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, and the Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Network. Courtney has a M.A. in Public Administration and a B.S. in Health Studies, both from the University of Rhode Island.

**Anthony Griggs, Director, Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Coordinating Committee (ERWSCC)** — A. J. Griggs, BSEE/MSEE (retired), has over 30 years of experience in circuit design and software. He concluded his career managing software development of dimensional metrology applications for machined parts on machine tools. He is continuing his explorations into embedded computing and 3D printing applications when not hiking or maintaining local trails.

**Brian Hagenbuch, Executive Director, Steep Rock Association** — A good day for Brian Hagenbuch is a day in the woods. Raised on a small truck farm in Pennsylvania, he spent most of his childhood exploring fields and forests where he fell in love with the natural world. After a 25-year career in academic teaching and administration, he brings broad leadership experience and a background in place-based environmental education, invertebrate conservation, invasive species, and

the influence of ecological disturbances on forest ecosystems. He's earned degrees in entomology from Penn State and University of Florida as well as a PhD in environmental studies from Antioch University-New England. Brian can often be found hiking with his four-legged field assistant (Cody), bicycling backroads, kayaking local streams, enjoying local foods and beverages, or relaxing with a good crossword puzzle!

**Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association** — Eric Hammerling is the Executive Director of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, the first conservation organization established in Connecticut (1895). Eric is responsible for CFPA's budget, operations, and oversees its programs on Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails, Environmental Education, Land Conservation, and WalkCT. Eric is also the programmatic lead for CFPA's state and federal advocacy efforts. Eric is a member of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council Board of Directors.

**Lisa Hayden, New England Forestry Foundation** — Lisa Hayden is the Outreach Manager at New England Forestry Foundation where she focuses on woodland owner education and partnerships to advance conservation and sustainable forestry. She led a comprehensive landowner outreach project in the 38-town MassConn Woods region, to connect woodland owners with resources to make decisions about long-term conservation and management of their land, including climate change considerations. A Connecticut native and landowner herself, she served as a member of the Governor's Council on Climate Change (CT GC3) - Forests Sub-Group, and previously worked with The Nature Conservancy's forest climate and communications teams. Lisa holds a BA in Journalism from the University of Connecticut and a MA in Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning from Tufts University.

**Joyce Hemingson, Board Member, Connecticut Botanical Society** — Now retired from White Flower Farm, Joyce Hemingson serves on the Colebrook Conservation Commission and the board of the Connecticut Botanical Society. She is also a long-time member of the Colebrook Land Conservancy. She is the president of FairWindCT, which she helped found in 2010.

**Shashika Himandi, Master's Student, University of Connecticut** — Shashika Himandi is a 1st year Master's student from University of Connecticut Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources. Shimandi is serving as a graduate research assistant and enthusiastic researcher of GIS and land cover change.

**Amanda Johnson, Agricultural Programs Director, CT Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)** — Amanda Johnson is a graduate of the University of Connecticut with a dual degree in Natural Resources Management & Engineering as well as Landscape Architecture. She is passionate about working with Connecticut farmers to help them be sustainable while also innovative, so they can succeed in Connecticut agriculture. Amanda joined CT RC&D in 2005 and currently oversees all of CT RC&D's agriculture programs & projects that focus on energy, soil health, and climate smart practices.

**Melissa Kalvestrand, Executive Director, Land Trust Accreditation Commission** — Melissa Kalvestrand served many roles at the Commission since joining in November 2009 before being named executive director in January 2020. During her tenure at the Commission, she has overseen the accreditation review process and facilitated the accreditation decisions for over 100 applicants each year. She partnered in developing, interpreting, reviewing, and revising the accreditation requirements and maintaining the Requirements Manual. She also co-facilitated the public participation process resulting in the 2017 revisions to Land Trust Standards and Practices. As executive director, she has been leveraging the successes of the accreditation program and of accredited land trusts to advance the Commission's next phase of work. That work includes maintaining the strengthening of land trusts, maintaining public trust, and engaging with land trusts in new ways to improve their return on investment in the program.

**Mark Kasinskas, Forester/Geographer, Self-Employed** — Mark Kasinskas is a forester and geographer based in Cheshire. He is past President and Board Member of the Cheshire Land Trust, past Town Environmental Planner in Cheshire, and is currently an advisor for the Coalition for a Sustainable Cheshire. He has over 30 years of professional mapping experience ranging from field survey work to GIS. He is currently a Senior Environmental Scientist with Burns & McDonnell in Wallingford. He is a CT-Certified Forester and a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

**Kip Kolesinskas, Consulting Conservation Scientist, Connecticut Farmland Trust** — Kip's current projects include assisting agencies, NGO's, and private individuals with farmland protection, land access and affordability for new and beginning farmers, farmland restoration, and climate change adaptation strategies. Formerly USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service State Soil Scientist for Connecticut, Kip worked with farmers, educators, government and nonprofits to help them protect farmland and wetlands, and use soils information to make better informed land use decisions.

**Vincent LaFontan, Executive Director, Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust** — Vincent D. LaFontan, MHA, is a nationally recognized non-profit leader and consultant to youth-serving organizations, for twenty-five years. Currently, he is the Executive Director of Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust, Woodbury, Connecticut; he is also the former Board President of the Connecticut After School Network; and former vice chair of the National AfterSchool Association's Board of Directors in Washington, D.C.

**Robert LaFrance, Policy Director, Audubon Connecticut** — Robert LaFrance received his JD from Quinnipiac University School of Law (IOLTA Fellow) and BA in Economics and Ecology from the University of Arizona. Formerly the Director of Governmental Affairs for the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), he is currently the Director of Policy (CT) for the National Audubon Society, as well as an Adjunct Professor of Law at Quinnipiac School of Law, Member of the Habitat Committee of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and an on-going proxy for Governor's Appointee to the ASMFC. He is an advisor to graduate students at the Yale School of the Environment, commissioner (and former Vice Chair) of the town of Clinton's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, member of DEEP's Environmental Justice Working Group, member of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Advisory Committee, member of the Financing and Funding Adaptation and Resilience and the Resilient Infrastructure and Nature Based Solutions Working Groups of the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3), member of the Dean's Advisory Board of the University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources, and recently appointed as a Member of the Advisory Board of the Connecticut Office of the Conservation Law Foundation.

**Katharine Lange, Policy Specialist, Mass Rivers Alliance** — Katharine works as the Policy Specialist for the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the rivers and streams of the Commonwealth. She works directly with legislators to craft and advance state legislation to improve the environment and local climate resilience, and to increase funding to the state agencies who steward our lands and waters. Katharine attended the University of Connecticut for her BA and Master's in Public Administration, and worked on land conservation policy in Connecticut for two years as the first Sandy Breslin Conservation Fellow with CLCC.

**Aaron Lefland, Deputy Directory, Connecticut Land Conservation Council** — Aaron Lefland joined the Connecticut Land Conservation Council in May of 2022 as the organization's first Deputy Director. In this role, he supports CLCC in delivering technical assistance to build land trust capacity and sustainability. Prior to joining CLCC, Aaron spent five years as the Executive Director of the New Canaan Land Trust. There, he led the organization to many milestones including becoming nationally accredited, ushering in a new strategic plan and first-ever strategic conservation plan, and more than doubling household membership. His previous work experience includes managing a community forestry program and conducting ecological research examining long-term forest dynamics. Aaron holds a Master of Forest Science from the Yale School of the Environment, where his coursework and research focused on the sustainable management of New England's forests. He also holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Environmental Studies from Brandeis University. In his free time, Aaron can be found hiking, rock climbing, skiing, swimming, gardening, foraging, or otherwise enjoying the great outdoors.

**Mary Ellen Lemay, Landowner Engagement Director, Aspetuck Land Trust** — Mary Ellen Lemay is the Landowner Engagement Director for the Aspetuck Land Trust (Westport, Fairfield, Weston, Easton, Monroe CT), Pollinator Pathway Facilitator for the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership, and also a member of the Connecticut Native Plants Working Group. She earned her BS in Biology from Fairfield University, her MBA from Fordham University, and her Masters in Environmental Management from Yale University School of The Environment. She is the former



Trumbull Land Trust president and currently the Chairwoman of the Trumbull Conservation Commission, a CT DEEP Certified Master Wildlife Conservationist, and on the Board of the Merritt Parkway Conservancy.

**Vincent LaFontan, Executive Director, Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust** — Vincent D. LaFontan, MHA, a nationally recognized non-profit leader and consultant to youth-serving organizations, for twenty-five years. Currently, he is the Executive Director of Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust, Woodbury, Connecticut; he is also the former Board President of the Connecticut After School Network; and former vice chair of the National AfterSchool Association's Board of Directors in Washington, D.C.

**Honor Lawler, Project Manager, Trust for Public Land** — Honor Lawler is based in the Connecticut Office of Trust for Public Land, and works on land protection projects in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Honor has been with TPL for 7 years, working with land trusts, towns, state, and federal acquisitions across New England. She has extensive expertise in complex real estate, pulling in multiple public and private funding sources for acquisitions, and collaborating with partners and community members. Prior to joining the Trust for Public Land, Honor spent several years working on farmland preservation for both federal and state agencies in Connecticut and New Hampshire. Honor, a graduate of the University of Michigan, lives in West Haven.

**Jenora Ledbetter, Chief Executive Officer, The Self-Care Network** — Jenora Ledbetter created The Self Care Network LLC with the vision and drive to improve businesses and organizations focused on developing their leadership and diversity skills with experience and integrity. With a Masters in Child Advocacy and Policy and Bachelors in Psychology, Jenora is a certified Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer, and holds a certification in Employment & Labor Law with a focus on the legal aspects within HR Management, including discrimination laws, Family and Medical Leave Acts, drugs and alcohol in the workplace, and various labor relations laws. Jenora has over 14 years of experience helping businesses and organizations minimize the liability of discrimination in the workplace by enabling organizations and individuals to learn and grow to their fullest potential by recognizing representation gaps in their workforce and identifying fragmented leadership.

**Charles Levesque, Coordinator, Securing Northeast Forest Carbon Program** — Charles Levesque is President of Innovative Natural Resource Solutions LLC, a northeastern based consulting firm. He is also Executive Director of the North East State Foresters Association and Coordinator of its Securing Northeast Forest Carbon Program. Mr. Levesque has over 43 years of experience as a forester, former land trust director and board member.

**Andrew Long, Trail Administrator, National Park Service New England National Scenic Trail** — Andrew based in Madison, CT, and manages the overall administration of the trail in conjunction with the Connecticut Forest & Park Association in CT and the Appalachian Mountain Club in MA. Prior to the National Park Service, Andrew was a management consultant working with Fire Island National Seashore on various commercial and operational projects. He is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and served for over 10 years in operations around the world. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Master in Business Administration degree from the Yale School of Management.

**Kate Losey, Remote Monitoring Project Manager, Land Trust Alliance** — Kate Losey is the remote monitoring project manager for the Land Trust Alliance. She has experience with the stewardship and monitoring needs of small and regional land trusts before coming to the Alliance. Her experience with implementing remote technologies has found a variety of uses including saving time on the monitoring and reporting process, completing baseline reports, documenting ecosystem health features and monitoring for climate change and land restoration. She holds a master's degree in human dimensions from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a bachelor's degree in wildlife ecology and French from the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

**Courtney MacDonald, Board Member, Land Heritage Coalition of Glastonbury** — Courtney MacDonald has been involved with the Land Heritage Coalition of Glastonbury since 2008 and has served as both secretary and president over the years. Her association with LHC grew out of a grassroots effort by a local non-profit to preserve and protect a formerly farmed parcel from being subdivided and developed. Originally from the Berkshires, Courtney and her husband

have resided in South Glastonbury for 20+ plus years. Over the years, she has served on the Historic District Commission of Glastonbury as well as the board of the Historical Society of Glastonbury.

Courtney became involved with Nix the Knotweed through Diana Fiske and quickly embarked on a coordinated effort with the Town of Glastonbury to tackle Knotweed and other invasives in Ferry Landing Park, which is home to the Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry, the oldest continuously operated ferry in the country. With her kids off to college, Courtney enjoys volunteering with Foodshare through her church, playing tennis and walking in the fields surrounding her property with her springer spaniel.

**Connie Manes, Manes Consulting LLC; Executive Director, Kent Land Trust; Manager Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative** — Connie Manes provides organizational consulting services to nonprofit conservation organizations throughout the northeast, with a focus on Land Trust Standards & Practices and Land Trust Accreditation. She is the Executive Director of the accredited Kent Land Trust, and the Director of the Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative, a Regional Conservation Partnership of 34 land trusts in northwest Connecticut. Since 2013, she has also served as a Circuit Rider for the Land Trust Alliance, providing direct assistance to small and all-volunteer land trusts. Connie holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Pace University and a Juris Doctorate from New York University School of Law. She chairs Kent's Conservation Commission. In her free time, she can be found at the hockey rink with her sons, running or hiking, or searching for critters in local streams.

**Nancy Marek, Founder, BirdHabitatBot LLC** — Nancy Marek, Founder of BirdHabitatBot, is currently developing a robot prototype under the National Science Foundation's Small Business Innovation Research grant. She is working on a new method using drones and robotics to map/monitor/remove non-native invasive plants in the deciduous forest understory. She received a B.A. in biology from Mount Holyoke College, a MS-Forestry from the Yale School of the Environment, and a Ph.D. from the Dept. of Natural Resources and the Environment at the University of Connecticut. Marek is also a licensed forester in CT. Her favorite activities include reading, gardening, and birdwatching.

**Dr. Susan Masino, Ph.D, Vernon Roosa Professor of Applied Science, Trinity College** — Susan Masino is a Professor of Applied Science at Trinity College and a neuroscientist. She is interested in opportunities to promote and restore brain health, and, alongside her neuroscience research, she has been applying an interdisciplinary lens to local resource use and land conservation. In 2018 Dr. Masino was awarded a Charles Bullard Research Fellowship at Harvard University on forests and brain health and is translating that work into her scholarship and teaching. In 2019 she collaborated with a climate scientist and an ecologist to publish the seminal paper on “proforestation” – the quantified benefits maintaining some forests as intact forest ecosystems to foster maximal carbon storage and ecological and structural complexity. Dr. Masino is on the Pinchot Institute for Conservation and currently serving on the Science and Technology Working Group of the Governor's Council on Climate Change in Connecticut.

**Caitlin Mather, Land Protection Manager, Northeast Wilderness Trust (NEWT)** — Caitlin Mather (Land Protection Manager) has a B.S in Political Science from Virginia Polytechnic Institute. She started in land conservation as a Paralegal for the Vermont Land Trust before joining the Northeast Wilderness Trust to support new conservation transactions and coordinate the Wildland's Partnership Program. She is very familiar with Connecticut's northwest corner, having hiked the Appalachian Trail in 2014 with her now husband.

**Courtney MacDonald, Vice Chairman, Land Heritage Coalition of Glastonbury** — Courtney MacDonald has been involved with the Land Heritage Coalition of Glastonbury since 2008 and has served as both secretary and president over the years. Her association with LHC grew out of a grassroots effort by a local non-profit to preserve and protect a formerly farmed parcel from being subdivided and developed. Originally from the Berkshires, Courtney and her husband have resided in South Glastonbury for 20+ plus years. Over the years, she has served on the Historic District Commission of Glastonbury as well as the board of the Historical Society of Glastonbury. Courtney became involved with Nix the Knotweed through Diana Fiske and quickly embarked on a coordinated effort with the Town of Glastonbury to tackle Knotweed and other invasives in Ferry Landing Park, which is home to the Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry, the oldest continuously operated ferry in the country. With her kids off to college, Courtney enjoys volunteering with Foodshare through her church, playing tennis and walking in the fields surrounding her property with her springer spaniel.

**Rich McDermott, Appraiser, RP McDermott & Associates, Inc.** — Richard McDermott is an MAI real estate appraiser and principal of R.P. McDermott Associates LLC, a real estate appraisal and consulting firm established in July 1993. The firm provides appraisal consulting, fee appraisal and appraisal review services to federal and state agencies, municipalities, land trusts, private individuals, financial institutions and corporations. Richard received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing Management from Montclair State University and a Master's Degree in Regional Planning from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. After completing his master's degree, Richard worked as a real estate analyst with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) where his primary responsibility was interfacing with landowners and MDC foresters on a regional watershed land acquisition project within the Quabbin, Wachusett and Ware reservoir systems in western Massachusetts. Other responsibilities at TPL included evaluating land acquisitions, easements, appraisals and land exchange projects. Richard transitioned to becoming an appraiser by working 4 years as a fee appraiser under Karl Kaffenberger MAI and John Flint MAI in Simsbury Connecticut before he was hired by Fleet Bank in Hartford as Chief Appraiser. At Fleet Bank Richard was responsible for setting up and managing an appraisal department as well as ordering and reviewing appraisals. The primary focus of R.P. McDermott Associates LLC is the valuation of land, conservation easements, farms, farmland preservation easements as well as appraisals and market studies for affordable housing projects. Richard has extensive appraisal and review experience with the CT DEEP's open space grant program, the CT Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (ACEP-ALE and ACEP-WRE), and the CT Housing Finance Authority (affordable housing projects).

**Will O'Meara, CT Field Agent, Land For Good** — Will O'Meara is the CT Field Agent at Land For Good, as well as a vegetable farmer and advocate for farmers in our state and the region. Will has been farming in Connecticut since 2011 and knows the challenges of finding secure access to land firsthand. The most rewarding part of his work is helping farmers to identify opportunities to start or expand their operations, as well as assisting retiring farmers and landowners in identifying farmers that can steward their land for the next generation.

**Spencer Meyer, Head of Science, NCX** — Dr. Spencer Meyer is the Head of Science at NCX, responsible for activating the most credible, innovative science on natural climate solutions. He works externally with stakeholders and thought leaders to link the science and business of natural capital markets. He also oversees internal science alignment across all teams for carbon, biodiversity, and other forms of natural capital. Spencer is a forester and landscape ecologist with over 20 years of experience working collaboratively with public and private sector partners to solve natural resource challenges. Spencer previously worked at the Highstead Foundation, Yale School of the Environment, The Nature Conservancy, Harvard Forest and the University of Maine. He is a co-founder of Sebago Clean Waters, an advisor to conservation NGOs and private foundations, and a frequent speaker on forest management, natural climate solutions, and conservation finance. Spencer earned his A.B. from Dartmouth College and his M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Maine.

**Dr. Anne-Sophie Pagé, BVSc, Environmental Activist** — Anne-Sophie Pagé is an environmentalist and veterinarian from the distant shores of Aotearoa New Zealand. At 25 years old, there are two priorities in her life. The first fostering emotional connections between individuals and the environment in the hope of developing a holistic sense of kaitiakitanga (environmental guardianship) in the face of climate change and the second using her knowledge as a veterinarian to assist in mitigating the biodiversity crisis. Having worked with wildlife for the majority of her life, including the magnificent royal albatross and some of the rarest species of penguins and sea lions on Earth, she has witnessed firsthand the devastating impacts caused or influenced by people, either directly or indirectly currently being imposed on our environment. In recent years, Anne-Sophie has sailed the Pacific with a team of revolutionary scientists monitoring the state of our oceans in conjunction with the Sir Peter Blake Trust and Tara Ocean Foundation. She has sat with world leaders and voiced her concerns at the APEC Summit in Vietnam and at the United Nations in New York, lived out in the African bush dehorning rhino in an effort to combat the poaching crisis, voyaged down to the Sub-Antarctic Islands on advocacy missions for the Enderby Trust and researched penguin population dynamics in remote Patagonia. She has sat on the New Zealand UNESCO Youth Reference Panel and served a three-year term on the New Zealand Conservation Board advising the Minister of Conservation on environmental issues. Over the past summer, she was the lead veterinarian on an annual expedition down to the Sub-Antarctic region conducting mortality studies on the critically endangered New Zealand sea lion and has recently been appointed as a director of the Tasmanian Wildlife Hospital. She

is about to embark on a three-year residency in wildlife pathology which will enable her to conduct wide scale health assessments of declining populations and influence management changes. Anne-Sophie is a published writer, accomplished photographer and has worked as a wildlife guide for seven years whilst completing her university studies. She currently resides on the North West Coast of Tasmania, Australia and fills her spare time hiking, sailing and scuba diving. To learn more about her environmental experiences and perspectives check out her website: [www.greenangst.com](http://www.greenangst.com)

**Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council** — Amy Blaymore Paterson joined the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) in 2010 as its first Executive Director. Working with the CLCC Board of Directors and Advisory Council, Amy provides the Connecticut conservation community with technical assistance, training and advocacy to further advance permanent land conservation across the state. Before joining CLCC, Amy served as a Project Manager for The Trust for Public Land and worked for over twenty years as an attorney, concentrating her practice in land preservation and environmental protection.

**Shelby Perry, Wildlands Ecologist, Northeast Wilderness Trust** — Shelby Perry (Wildlands Ecologist) first joined NEWT staff in 2016 with a B.S. in Environmental Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, a M.S. in Plant Biology–Field Naturalist from the University of Vermont. In her role she works on land protection and stewardship considerations and leads long-term research projects on rewilding and wilderness science. She also participates in efforts such as Vermont Conservation Design in order to share science for why wilderness conservation should be a larger component of the conservation context at state and regional levels.

**Cynthia Rabinowitz, Executive Director, Northwest Conservation and Professional Soil and Wetland Scientist** — Cynthia currently serves as the Executive Director of Northwest Conservation District, a non-profit organization serving 34 towns with natural resources and land use issues, agriculture, and sustainability. She has been a consulting soil and wetland scientist for 43 years, is a Certified Permaculture Design Consultant, horticulturist and ecological landscape designer. Her articles have appeared in newspapers, Connecticut Gardener, Fine Gardening and Edible Nutmeg. The March/April 2015 edition of Connecticut Gardener carries her article, “A Permaculture Primer”. She is a founding director of CTNOFA, was County Agriculture and Community Resource Development Agent for UConn. Cooperative Extension System in the 1980’s. Additionally, she owned and operated a commercial greenhouse operation for 15 years. She has taught in the graduate programs at Southern Connecticut State University (Environmental Design), the University of New Haven (Wetlands Ecology), and guest lectured at The Graduate Institute (Permaculture). Cynthia is available for consultations and lectures. She can be reached at [Cynthiar@nwcd.org](mailto:Cynthiar@nwcd.org)

**Catherine Rawson, Executive Director, Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy** — Catherine Rawson is the executive director of the Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy (NCLC), chair of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, commissioner of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, council member of the Land Trust Alliance Conservation Defense Advisory Council, and a Greenprint Steering Committee member. A graduate of Bates College and Vermont Law School, where she studied environmental law, Catherine also has a master’s degree in environmental management from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Prior to joining NCLC, she served as an assistant attorney general for the State of Connecticut.

**Richard Roberts, Esq., Hallaron & Sage, LLP** — Richard P. Roberts is a partner with the law firm of Halloran Sage. He frequently represents municipalities in real estate acquisitions and sales, land use matters, charter review and revision, drafting and review of ordinances, FOIA and elections enforcement matters, and property tax issues. He also provides legal counsel to financial institutions, individuals, limited liability companies and corporations in real estate acquisitions and sales, land use applications, financing transactions, general business affairs and contracts and agreements. Mr. Roberts is a member of the executive committee of the Planning and Zoning Law Section of the Connecticut Bar Association and a member of the Connecticut, Maine and New Hampshire Bar Associations, and a member of the Connecticut Association of Municipal Attorneys. He also participates actively in the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, the Connecticut Council of Small Towns and the Connecticut Town & City Management Association. Rich is also a member of the steering committee of the Working Lands Alliance, a statewide coalition devoted to the preservation of farmland in Connecticut and is a member of the faculty and advisory committee of the Land Use

Academy of UConn's Center for Land Use Education and Research. He has been a member of the Wethersfield Planning and Zoning Commission since 1991, serving for many years either as its Chairman or Vice Chairman. He previously served as a member of that town's Zoning Board of Appeals, Flood Encroachment Control Board, and its Economic Development and Improvement Commission. He has also served as chairman of the Wethersfield Republican Town Committee since 1995. Mr. Roberts serves on the Board of Governors of Hartford Hospital and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Eastern States Exposition. He also serves as legal counsel to the Woodstock Historical Society, Inc. and Chamberlin Mill, Inc.

**Susan Robinson, Board Member, Connecticut Botanical Society** — Susan Robinson sits on the Redding Conservation Commission and the board of the CT Botanical Society. She has a long commitment to environmental causes in CT having been involved in many conservation projects including those promoting urban forestry and the protection of community trees, the Norwalk River watershed and in the creation of the Norwalk River Valley Trail.

**Alex Rodriguez, Environmental Justice Specialist, Save the Sound** — As Environmental Justice Specialist for Save the Sound, Alex Rodriguez is responsible for developing and implementing monthly grassroots stakeholder programs in Connecticut and New York; engaging stakeholders in policymaking; applying an environmental justice lens on public policy; collaborating with colleagues to advance legislative priorities; building relationships and educating policymakers; and providing communications support for environmental justice-related subject matter, particularly on organization of briefing papers, press events and educational webinars. Prior to joining Save the Sound, Alex served as Community Organizer to the CT League of Conservation Voters where he planned and executed campaigns relating to climate action, voting rights, and electric school bus advancement. He has also served in roles such as Chair of the Public Participation subcommittee of the Governor's Council on Climate Change, and Vice Chair of Hartford's Advisory Commission on the Environment.

**Julia Rogers, Senior Land Protection Manager, Housatonic Valley Association** — Julia Rogers serves as Senior Land Protection Manager at the Housatonic Valley Association. She has a B.A. in biology from Colby College, and 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, where she managed their conservation portfolio and pursued new conservation opportunities. She also has extensive research experience - working on projects relating to invasive plant species, non-native earthworms, and tropical rainforest restoration. At HVA, Julia works with partners throughout the region to advance conservation projects and the Follow the Forest Initiative. Julia loves being outside and can often be found whitewater canoeing/kayaking, hiking, trail running, or exploring the Housatonic River Valley.

**Patrick Roy, First Selectman, Town of Roxbury** — Patrick Roy grew up in rural Connecticut where his appreciation for the great outdoors began in cub scouts. He is still as awestruck by the beauty of nature and devotion to preserving that beauty for generations to enjoy. The abundant natural landscape and small-town charm is what drew him to Roxbury. He shares a kinship with Roxbury residents' desire to preserve the countryside and rural lifestyle. Turning passion to action, he served as a mentor sponsoring over 200 Eagle Scout projects from trail clearing, protection of natural species, and constructed raised gardens for 8 elementary schools educating youth on the importance of organic farming. Serving on the Roxbury Land Trust 2014-2020 was an honor.

**Reginald Saint Fortcolin, Conservation Outreach Manager, Aspetuck Land Trust** — Reggy is the Conservation Outreach Manager for Aspetuck Land Trust, a regional land trust primarily serving the towns of Easton, Weston, Fairfield, Westport, Monroe, and Bridgeport for the benefit and education of the public.

**Elizabeth Sanford, Marketing Consultant, Hyphen3** — Beth Sanford has spent her career in marketing, taking on leadership roles at top brands, including some of the best known entertainment properties HBO, Time Magazine, Lifetime Television, and AMC Networks. Over the past 10 years, her focus has been on working with start-ups, local businesses, and non-profits to help them expand and engage their customer base through integrated and digital marketing. As a board member and head of the Outreach and Development Committee of the New Canaan Land Trust (NCLT) since 2017, Beth has led marketing efforts that have transformed NCLT, increasing its membership base 150%,

doubling donations, and dramatically expanding awareness. A graduate of Princeton University and Columbia University Business School, Beth has loved the outdoors since her earlier days of exploring the woods behind her house in Carlisle, MA.

**Jonathon Savage, Farm Manager, Gather New Haven** — Jonathan does training and overall management of a multitude of projects on our farms throughout the city of New Haven. Jonathon is native of New Haven. His education in gardening is rooted in urban farming techniques that he learned through his grandparents, all of which were migrants from the southern US. He has maintained gardens in the city for over 30 years. Throughout Jonathon's career working with at-risk youth throughout the state, Jonathon always brought his love of growing food to his work, including within the programs or teaching in the classroom. Jonathon's role at Gather New Haven brings together his lifelong work and his lifelong passion.

**Denise Savageau, President, Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts** — Denise Savageau has worked in the environmental field in Connecticut for over 35 years including 20 years as Conservation Director for the Town of Greenwich, CT and 9 years as the District Manager with Hartford County Soil and Water Conservation District. She is active at the local, state, and national level on soil and water conservation and is currently chair of the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District, President of the CT Association of Conservation Districts, and a Board Member for the National Association of Conservation Districts. She is also chair of the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation, a state agency, where she recently secured federal funding for watershed planning and GIS mapping to advance source water protection in CT and for mapping of subaqueous soils in Long Island Sound. She serves on the EPA Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee, the Connecticut State Water Plan Implementation Workgroup, the CT Water Planning Council Advisory Group, and the NRCS State Technical Committee.

**Anne Scheibner, Founding Member, Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust** — Anne is a founding member of the SE CT Community Land Trust and of the New London Chapter, and serves on the organizing committee for the SE CT Fund for Land Equity which is the revolving community loan fund. The SE CT Fund for Land Equity is a partnership between the SE CT CLT and Equity Trust which is based in Amherst, MA. Anne worked with Equity Trust's founder Chuck Matthei back in 1998. Anne has lived and worked at St. Francis House, New London since 1998 and therefore been involved with their work in a variety of areas including supporting the development of FRESH, New London's community gardening initiatives and the Francis Fund for SE CT which has supported the affordable housing work of the Homeless Hospitality Center as well as the acquisition of the SE CT CLT's first house. Anne also served for eight years as liaison from the board of the Denison Society in Mystic to the Denison Farm Market. Her educational background includes Wellesley College BA and MBA from the Columbia University Graduate School of Business.

**Sydney Seldon, Undergraduate Student, Environmental Science & Inter-Cultural Climate Communications, University of Connecticut** — Sydney Seldon (she/her) is a UConn sophomore dual-majoring in Environmental Science and is currently proposing an individualized major that explores how to communicate conservation science and policy across inter-cultural divides in communities. Sydney's currently serving as a Difference Maker Mentor for the UConn Natural Resource Conservation Academy and as an intern for the Office of Sustainability. She plans to focus her academic work and subsequent career upon environmental justice and engaging in strategic dialogue to produce genuine understanding and prosperous, long-lasting change in communities.

**Misha Semënov-Leiva, Senior Architect & Sustainability Coordinator, Centerbrook Architects and Planners; Adjunct Professor, University of Hartford, Department of Architecture; Associate Fellow, Trumbull College at Yale University** — Misha Semënov-Leiva (he/him/his) is an architect and alternate representative for the town of Essex on the Connecticut River Gateway Commission. An avid kayaker, hiker, bicyclist, and all-around nature enthusiast, Misha is passionate about the conservation of the Connecticut River Valley and its unparalleled natural and cultural resources. Most recently, he has been championing the introduction of light pollution language into the Gateway standards. Misha has presented his expertise on sustainable design at various conferences and media outlets, including the American Institute of Architects' Conference on Architecture, Greenbuild, the Northeast Summit for a Sustainable Built Environment, and the US Green Building Council's Built for Health podcast. A licensed Architect in Connecticut, LEED BD+C Accredited Professional, and Certified Passive House Consultant, Misha holds a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture

from Princeton University, a Master of Architecture from the Yale School of Architecture, and a Master of Environmental Management from the Yale School of the Environment.

**Austin Serio, Chicoran Shakori, Co-Founder & CEO, ShockTalk; IT Manager at 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.

**Jane Seymour, Wildlife Biologist, CT DEEP Wildlife Division** — Jane Seymour is a Wildlife Biologist with the CT DEEP's Wildlife Division and is the steward of the Belding Wildlife Management Area in Vernon, CT where she manages wildlife habitat and provides environmental education.

**Alan Sheiness, Treasurer, The Lyme Land Trust; Amateur Astrophotographer** — Alan Sheiness retired in 2015 as an executive of the global human resource company ADP after a 30-year career that included tours around the USA and Europe. He and his wife Jeanne finally made their home in Lyme, CT in 2011, seeking the open spaces and calm remoteness after years of the urban and suburban hustle-bustle. In Lyme, Alan serves as an elected member of the Board of Finance and on several other town boards and committees. He is also active on the board of several nonprofits including a regional volunteer pilot organization he co-founded in 2010 called PALS SkyHope which arranges 2,000-3,000 free flights a year for those in need of transportation to distant medical care and for other humanitarian purposes. Locally, he is the recently appointed Chair of Friends of Lymes' Senior Center, a local 501(c)(3) that raises funds to support the center's programs. Alan also is the Treasurer of Lyme Land Trust. (LLT). As an extension of his LLT responsibilities, Alan channeled his life-long passion for astronomy into an Astronomy and Dark Skies program. Over the last three years, he and a team of cohorts have hosted monthly public observing sessions at an exclusive dark sky site that includes a permanently installed 14” telescope housed in a roll-off-roof observatory along with several other telescopes that are set up for each session. The team has conducted private sessions at the local elementary school and at Cub Scout retreats as well. Alan believes one of the best ways to promote dark skies is to expose and engage the public directly in the beauty of the universe through these observing sessions.

**Elanah Sherman, Governance Committee Chair, Avalonia Land Conservancy** — Elanah has been involved in the disability rights movement for about 35 years. In numerous positions, both paid and volunteer, she has provided Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidance to private nonprofits, municipalities, and agencies of State government. She has also advocated for legislative agendas that support the civil rights of people with disabilities. Her special ADA interests include access to the arts, to libraries, and to the outdoors. Elanah serves as the disability access point person on Connecticut's Open Space, Natural Heritage, and Watershed Land Acquisition Review Board. She also sits on the Advisory Board of Trust for Public Land (Connecticut affiliate) and on the Avalonia Land Conservancy Board of Directors. Two evenings a week, March through September, Elanah monitors frogs at a Norwich pond as part of the national citizen science project FrogWatch USA (i.e., she crushes on frogs).

**Keila Silva, Student, Suffield High School** — Keila Silva is a fifteen-year-old climate activist who is dedicated towards the fight for environmental justice. After witnessing the disasters that Latino countries face, Keila was inspired to help her community in any way possible. As a result, Keila was drawn to the environmental justice movement. She felt inspired seeing her own community at the forefront of decision making, and wanted to be able to do this herself. Through a partnership with the University of Connecticut's Natural Resources and Conservation Academy, along with CT DEEP, Keila has been able to make great strides in her community by addressing environmental injustices that exclude marginalized communities within her hometown.

**Jeb Stevens, Trails Protection Coordinator, Connecticut Forest & Park Association** — Jeb Stevens is CFPA's Trails Protection Coordinator since May, 2021. Jeb has a B.S. in Geography from SCSU and an M.A. in Geography from UConn. He has taught courses in Geography at SCSU and Three Rivers Community College.

**Ashley Stewart, Equity Coach, Sustainable CT, Environmental Planner, Town of Bloomfield** — Ashley is a civil engineer with 10 years of experience specializing in water management and infrastructure. Her expertise spans the gamut of water management: distribution, storage, discharge and flood planning. She has distinct experience in environmental planning, permitting, funding, negotiation, construction management, community engagement and leadership experience. Ashley is a trained race dialog facilitator and has served as an Equity Coach for Sustainable CT since April 2019. Ashley has served the State of Connecticut in many ways, supporting municipal planning, protecting the state through management of dams, and through community outreach and engagement. Ashley grew up in and loves Connecticut and works with towns to implement equity into their sustainability goals and projects. Ashley is currently a graduate student at Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies conducting research around equity and environmental decision making for the Black community. Ashley lives in Manchester, CT. In her spare time she enjoys experiencing cultures through food, mentoring teens, and creating weekend adventures with her family.

**David Sutherland, Equity Trainer and Facilitator** — For the last eight of the 30 years he spent as The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Director of Government Relations in Connecticut, David also served as a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion trainer and leader for the organization. He was the founding Co-Chair of TNC's first State Chapter Diversity and Inclusion team, co-facilitated three-day diversity workshops for TNC's global Engaging Across Difference program; and served as global co-lead of TNC's Men as Allies gender equity initiative. After moving to Cape Cod in March 2020, David transitioned out of his TNC career, into broader diversity and inclusion work. He is a network partner with The Collective 180 consulting firm, and a Consulting Partner with KJR Consulting: Home – KJR Consulting, working with corporate and non-profit clients, such as Warner Media, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Save the Sound, Results for Development (R4D) Oxfam, and the Atlanta Botanical Gardens. David holds a B.A. from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, and a Master's degree in Environmental Studies from Antioch University. He enjoys cycling, hiking, kayaking, playing guitar, and good conversation.

**Suzanne Thompson, Coordinator, Nix the Knotweed** — Suzanne Thompson is a professional garden writer and environmental activist with Save the Sound. A CT NOFA Accredited Organic Land Care Professional and 2014 CT Master Gardener, she is co-leader of Pollinate Old Lyme! and a board member of CT's Mountain Laurel Chapter of Wild Ones native plants and landscapes advocacy organization. After a career that spanned from radio-TV to Capitol Hill, government agencies and life sciences corporations, she has returned to her roots of interviewing and writing about fellow gardeners. She has BS degrees in Urban Horticulture and Journalism from Kansas State University and MA in International Affairs from George Washington University. She launched Nix the Knotweed outreach campaign in May 2020, using social media and word of mouth to organize teams of volunteers to combat this and other invasive plants and restore native habitats.

**Andrea Urbano, Service Forester, CT DEEP** — Andrea Urbano is the Program Supervisor of Private and Municipal Lands for Connecticut's Division of Forestry. As such, she manages Connecticut's forest stewardship and urban forestry programs. Andrea previously served as Connecticut's Central District Service Forester, and worked as a CT Christmas tree grower, and a private consultant and contracted urban forester in Vermont. She earned her Master of Science in carbon forestry from the University of Vermont (Urbano and Keeton 2017) and her Bachelor of Science in environmental conservation and political science from the University of New Hampshire. She dedicates her free time to managing her small family farm, serving on her hometown's Agriculture Commission and Parks Association, and serving as the chair of CT's Chapter of the Society of American Foresters.

**Ailla Wasstrom-Evans, Esq., Attorney, Prue Law Group, P.C.** — Ailla Wasstrom-Evans is an attorney with the Land Trust Alliance's Conservation Defense Initiative. The Conservation Defense Initiative consists of 1) a Fund for Alliance response to federal and state challenges including litigation, legislation and regulation; 2) a Center that hosts an online legal library and facilitates a national network of expert attorneys and land trust practitioners; 3) a law school curriculum, an Advanced Symposia for experts and conservation defense offerings at Rally all of which provide legal education, risk



assessment training and technical assistance; and 4) Alliance Risk Management Services LLC (ARMS), which manages and supports Terraforma Risk Retention Group LLC (conservation defense liability insurance). Prior to joining the Land Trust Alliance, Ailla was in private practice at the Prue Law Group. Her practice areas included Land Conservation Law, Estate Planning, and Real Estate Law. Ailla was also an associate at Day Pitney LLP in the Real Estate, Environmental and Land Use Practice Group and she has worked as a legislative attorney for the Connecticut Finance, Revenue and Bonding and Planning and Zoning Committees. Ailla is a member of the Connecticut Bar Association and the Windham County Bar Association. Prior affiliations include the Connecticut Land Conservation Council Model Conservation Easement working group, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund, Board of Directors; the Oliver Ellsworth Inn of Court, Barrister; and CLiCK, Board of Directors. Ailla is a graduate of the University of Connecticut School of Law. She also has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Saint Michael's College and studied abroad at The University of the Americas in Puebla, Mexico where she studied Mexican politics while improving her proficiency of the Spanish language. Ailla is an eastern Connecticut native, having grown up in Brooklyn, CT. In her spare time, she enjoys the outdoors and spending quality time with her family.

**Kelly Watkinson, Land and Climate Program Manager, Land Trust Alliance**

**Joseph (Joe) Welsh, Natural Resources Manager, Aquarion Water Company and Shelton Land Trust Volunteer** — Joe began his career over two decades ago with Aquarion Water Company spending much of this time producing drinking water at one of AWC's surface water plants. Currently he is the Natural Resource Manager overseeing all things related to protecting Aquarion's surface and groundwater sources as well as recreation programs offered on the Centennial Watershed State Forest designated lands. His tenure as a volunteer with Shelton Land Trust follows a similar time frame and proof that time sure does fly by when you're having fun. In his spare time he likes hiking and checking out the work of other land and water conservation groups.

**Michelle Royce Williams, Leader, East Lyme CT Vets Field Team** — Michelle Royce Williams is a committed community volunteer in East Lyme where she also chairs the town's Planning Commission. In partnership with the town, the Vet's Field knotweed patch has been a great pilot for cooperation and coordination of municipal departments, volunteer knotweed choppers, East Lyme Pollinator Pathway and the Friends of Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. Through community connections and work in this highly-visible area, Michelle hopes to expand awareness and participation while also restoring natural habitat.

**Chandi Witharana, Assistant Research Professor, UConn** — Chandi Witharana is an Assistant Research Professor at the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of Connecticut. His research lab involves interdisciplinary remote sensing research with high international visibility, speaking equally to the transformational uses of remote sensing in environmental, industrial, agricultural, and humanitarian applications. He earned his PhD and MS degrees from the University of Connecticut. He was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the SUNY Stony Brook.

**Ethan Winter, National Smart Solar Director, American Farmland Trust** — Ethan Winter joined American Farmland Trust (AFT) in 2021 as the organization's first Northeast Solar Specialist. In this role, Ethan is building AFT's regional leadership in developing smart solar strategies, cross-sector partnerships and best practices for agrivoltaics. Previously, Ethan was a Project Developer and Senior Community Engagement Manager for Cypress Creek Renewables where he advanced a 100 MW portfolio of community solar projects in New York and Massachusetts. Prior to working in solar, Ethan led the Land Trust Alliance New York Program for 13 years. Ethan received a Master of Forestry from the Yale School of the Environment and a BA in Environmental Studies and Government from Bowdoin College.