



SOIL HEALTH LEADERSHIP | ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRODUCERS

Aaron Cooper,

Cut Fresh Organics, LLC

A 5th generation farmer, Aaron Cooper and his wife farm 325 acres of organic grains and vegetables on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Mr. Cooper previously worked at the University of Maryland at College Park for 17 years and the Lower Eastern Shore Research and Education Center for two years. His farm was featured on Episode 413 of Maryland Public Television's popular program, *Maryland Farm & Harvest*.

Thomas W. Croghan, M.D.

The Vineyards at Dodon, LLC

Dr. Croghan owns The Vineyards at Dodon, LLC, a vertically integrated vineyard and winery operation located on a historic family farm in Davidsonville, Maryland. Dr. Croghan blends traditional farming methods with modern ecology to build soil health. Trained as a physician and cellular immunologist, he is a Senior Fellow at Mathematica, a policy research organization. He previously worked for the RAND Corporation and Eli Lilly and Company and has served on the medical staff and faculty of numerous medical institutions and universities.

Steven Darcey

Edgewood Farm and Prince George's Soil Conservation District

Steven Darcey is a 4th generation farmer from Prince George's County who also serves as district manager for the Prince George's Soil Conservation District. He manages 310 acres of family owned property producing corn, soybeans, small grains and straw compost. Together with his wife he operates Edgewood Farm Stables. Edgewood Farm is certified by Maryland's Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP). It was inducted into the Governor's Hall of Fame in 1991 and recognized as a Conservation Farm of the Year in 1995. A Maryland soil health champion, Mr. Darcey uses no-till planting techniques, crop residue management, crop rotation, composting, and cover crops to build his soil. He is a certified professional in erosion and sediment control, nutrient management and pesticide application in Maryland. Mr. Darcey received a B.S. from the University of Maryland in 1980.

Steve Ernst

Ernst Grain and Livestock

Steve Ernst is a sixth generation grain and livestock farmer in Clear Spring, Maryland. The farm produces hogs, sheep, grain, and non-GMO feeds and uses numerous best management practices including zero tillage and cover crops. In 2010, it became the first farm certified by the Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP). Mr. Ernst is a senior agronomist at Martin's Elevator in Hagerstown and has worked for 32 years as an agronomy and nutrition consultant. He is a Certified Crop Advisor, Certified Maryland Nutrient Management Consultant, and holds dairy nutrition and dairy nutrition management certificates. He serves on the Maryland Farm Service Agency Committee, University of Maryland College of Agriculture's Global Leadership Council, Maryland Grain Producers Board of Directors, and Clear Spring High School Vocational Agriculture Program Advisory Council.

Matt Fry

Fair Hill Farms

Matt Fry is a managing partner at Fair Hill Farms, a 1,400 acre certified organic dairy and grain operation in Chestertown, Maryland. Mr. Fry and his family manage a diverse mix of perennial pastures while growing legumes, grains, and silage crops for their dairy cattle. Fair Hill Farms uses a reduced tillage organic system to feed its cows.

Trey Hill

Harborview Farms

A fourth generation grain farmer from Rock Hall, Maryland, Trey Hill and his family till corn, wheat, and soybeans on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Mr. Hill holds a degree in Farm Management and Economics from Purdue University and is committed to improving agricultural sustainability. He works tirelessly to bridge the gap between environmental and agricultural interests. Mr. Hill believes that with the right farming practices farmers can improve the quality of their lives, their land and waterways. Mr. Hill is married and has two children.

Robert Hutchison

Hutchison Brothers

Robert Hutchison and his family till approximately 3,400 acres of grain in Talbot and Caroline counties. The family focuses on innovative conservation practices including early adoption of cover crops, denitrifying bioreactors, and precision nutrient management. The Hutchisons are dedicated stewards of the land and have been widely recognized for their efforts. In 2005, the family was inducted into the Governor's Agricultural Hall of Fame. Mr. Hutchison is a member emeritus of the Harry Hughes Agro-Ecology Center in Queenstown and was named the first Master Farmer from Talbot County in 2017 by the Mid-Atlantic Master Farmers Association. In 2019, the Hutchison Brothers' operation was selected as a Chesapeake Champion for the Environment by the Horn Point Laboratory of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. Mr. Hutchison lives in Cordova with his wife of 49 years.

Janet O'Meara

Stone Valley Farm

Janet O'Meara and her husband own and operate Stone Valley Farm, a beef and grain operation in Carroll County. She began her career as a technician for the Maryland Department of Agriculture in Carroll County and currently works for Carroll County as the Watershed Management Coordinator, implementing restoration projects for compliance with the county's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit. Ms. O'Meara serves as an Associate Supervisor for the Carroll Soil Conservation District and is a member of Carroll County Farm Bureau.

AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

Michael Calkins

Maryland Young Farmers Advisory Board

Michael Calkins manages and writes conservation plans for all agricultural assessed parcels of land in Howard County. Before joining the Howard Soil Conservation District, Mr. Calkins worked for the Maryland Department of Agriculture as a Regional Equine and Soil Conservation Planner. He has extensive knowledge of Howard County agriculture and is a past president of the Howard County Farm Bureau Young Farmers. Mr. Calkins currently serves on the Maryland Farm Bureau Political Action Committee and is chairman of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation. He holds a B.S. from Delaware Valley College in Agronomy and Environmental Sciences with a specialty in Turfgrass Management.

Colby Ferguson

Maryland Farm Bureau

Colby Ferguson is the government relations director for Maryland Farm Bureau, where he addresses state and national issues. Previously, he served as an agriculture business development specialist for Frederick County, a sales and marketing manager for Sinclair Cattle Company, and a nutrition specialist with Southern States Cooperative. Mr. Ferguson is a 2006 LEAD Maryland fellow. He serves on the LEAD Maryland Board of Directors, the Maryland Agriculture Council Board of Directors and the Maryland Agriculture Marketing Professionals Group. An experienced livestock judge, Mr. Ferguson lives with his family on his Walkersville, Maryland farm. He holds a bachelor's degree in Animal Science and Biotechnology from Oklahoma State University.

Amy Jacobs

Delaware-Maryland 4R Alliance

Amy Jacobs represents the Delaware-Maryland 4R Alliance, a collaboration between agribusinesses, farmers, government agencies, conservation groups, and scientists working to ensure that nutrients are applied using conservation stewardship practices. Additionally, Ms. Jacobs is a member of the Maryland/DC Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, where she leads efforts to improve water quality in agricultural landscapes throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Ms. Jacobs received her M.S. in Environmental and Forest Biology from the State University of New York and Syracuse University, and a B.S. in Forestry and Wildlife from Virginia Tech.

Denzell Mitchell Jr.

Farm Alliance of Baltimore

Denzell Mitchell Jr. is the Deputy Director of the Farm Alliance of Baltimore. Mr. Mitchell is an educator, farmer, cook, and beekeeper. Born and raised in Guthrie, Oklahoma, he and his wife planted themselves in Baltimore in 2004 and soon got active in Baltimore's urban agriculture. Mr. Mitchell went on to found the Greening and Nutrition program at Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School. While at the school, he heard the call from the land. On six vacant lots, various backyards and with the help of a chef and food historian, he brought a nearly-forgotten heirloom, Baltimore's Fish Pepper, back to the Chesapeake region's culinary palette. He left the classroom in 2010 to pursue dreams of vegetable farming and operated Five Seeds Farm until 2015. Mr. Mitchell enjoys eating, cooking and spending time with his family and friends. He enjoys Capoeira Angola (an Afro-Brazilian martial art), books, music and movies. He lives in the Union Square neighborhood of Baltimore with his wife and five children.

Jen Nelson

Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

Jen Nelson is the new Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD). Through her business, Resource Smart LLC., Ms. Nelson helps to coordinate partnerships and projects that support Delmarva and Mid-Atlantic farmers in improving the economic and environmental sustainability of their farms. Current projects include serving as the Executive Director for MASCD as well as the Delaware Association of Conservation Districts and helping to coordinate the Delaware Soil Health Partnership. She has a B.S. in Environmental Science from Rutgers University, and has been a Certified Crop Advisor since 2004.

Mike Twining

Willard Agri-Service

Mike Twining is the Director of Sales and Marketing for Willard Agri-Service and has worked in the retail farm supply business for the last 25 years. Mr. Twining holds a Commercial Pesticide Applicators License and is a Certified Crop Adviser and Certified Nutrient Management Consultant in Delaware and Maryland. He serves as the nutrient management advisor to the Kent Conservation District's board of directors in Delaware. Mr. Twining grew up on a poultry and grain farm on Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore. He graduated from Cornell University with a degree in Agricultural Economics and Farm Business Management. He lives in Camden-Wyoming, Delaware with his wife and two children.

AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

Christopher Beck

Maryland Department of the Environment

Christopher Beck is the Division Chief of the Climate Change Program at the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). His division produces the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act (GGRA) Plan, a comprehensive document that plots a course for Maryland to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Mr. Beck's work involves applying multidisciplinary approaches in climate and air pollution sciences to investigate how climate change impacts Maryland. Mr. Beck served on the Healthy Soils Consortium from 2016-2019. He received his master's degree in Environmental Health Science and Engineering from Johns Hopkins University.

Elliot Campbell, Ph.D.

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Dr. Elliot Campbell directs the Center for Economic and Social Science at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Center develops tools and data products on the ecological co-benefits of conservation and restoration, including climate resiliency and carbon storage. Dr. Campbell is responsible for quantifying the carbon benefits to meet Maryland's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act goals. He represents DNR on the Maryland Commission on Climate Change's Mitigation Working Group. Prior to joining DNR, Dr. Campbell was a research faculty member at the University of Maryland College Park, where he received his doctorate.

Grace Garst

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Grace Garst serves as the acting state Conservation Agronomist for NRCS until January in the absence of Christie Brown. Prior to this position, she was an NRCS Conservation Planner for Frederick County, Maryland where she worked with farmers to get much needed conservation practices on the ground. Grace was raised on a family dairy farm surrounded by 4-H and FFA opportunities and was educated at the University of Maryland where she focused on Plant Science. She worked for the USDA-Agricultural Research Service for six years as a field trials technician overseeing cover crop species and establishment trials. In her spare time, she and her significant other farm 300+ acres in Frederick and Carroll counties. Recognizing the importance of soil health and conservation, they practice no-till farming, utilize diverse cover crops, readily integrate livestock into their cropping systems, and use a rotational grazing system for their beef and commercial goat herds.

Deborah Herr Cornwell

Maryland Department of Planning

Debbie Herr Cornwell is a resource conservation planner with the Maryland Department of Planning. She represents the department on the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Board and the Critical Area Commission. As the department's lead for the Transfer of Development Rights initiative, she reaches out to county and municipal jurisdictions to discuss the program's benefits. She supports the department's work on the Chesapeake Bay restoration, climate change and the Patuxent River Commission. A licensed landscape architect in Maryland and New Jersey, Ms. Cornwell has worked in the private, non-profit and government sectors for more than 30 years. Ms. Cornwell is a graduate of Temple University and Rutgers University – Cook College

Alisha Mulkey

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Alisha Mulkey is responsible for planning, developing, and coordinating policy, programs, and public information for the Office of Resource Conservation. She serves as Executive Secretary to the State Soil Conservation Committee, oversees the Animal Waste Technology Fund, and provides support to the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Advisory Committee. She formerly coordinated the department's Agricultural Watershed Implementation Program. Ms. Mulkey is nutrient management certified in Maryland. She received a B.S. in Soil Sciences from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and an M.S. in Soil and Watershed Science from the University of Maryland.

ACADEMIA

Ray R. Weil, Ph.D.

Professor, University of Maryland Department of Environmental Science and Technology

Dr. Ray R. Weil is an internationally recognized expert on soil science, nutrient cycling, soil organic matter, and cover crop systems for soil health and water quality. He developed methods for microbial biomass and active soil carbon adopted by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and ecosystem researchers worldwide. His research on multi-purpose cover crops and ecological approaches to soil management are used on farms large and small. His textbook, *The Nature and Properties of Soils*, is used around the world.

Steven B. Mirsky, Ph.D.

USDA Agricultural Research Service

Dr. Steven Mirsky is a research ecologist for the USDA's Agricultural Research Service. He conducts research on the multifunctional role of cover crops in controlling weeds, nitrogen scavenging, fixation and use efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration. Dr. Mirsky's cover crop systems research focuses on maintaining profitability while enhancing soil and water quality and reducing crop production energy requirements. Data from these studies are used to parameterize models that aim to optimize agro-ecosystem economic profitability and environmental sustainability. Dr. Mirsky received his Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State University.

Dietrich J. Epp Schmidt

University of Maryland

Dietrich J. Epp Schmidt is an environmental microbiologist who studies the impacts of human land management decisions on ecological outcomes. A Ph.D. candidate in Environmental Microbiology and the Food-Energy Nexus at the University of Maryland, Mr. Dietrich received his M.S. in Soil Microbiology and Urban Ecology from the University of Maryland and his B.A. in Biology from St. Mary's College.

Kathryne Everts, Ph.D.

Harry Hughes and Wye Research Education Center

The Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology provides leadership to promote environmentally sound and economically viable agriculture and forestry as Maryland's preferred land use through research, outreach and collaboration. The Wye Research and Education Center's programs utilize nearly 800 acres of land on the shores of the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The Center works to preserve the health of the Chesapeake Bay, sustain agricultural productivity and product diversity, and maintain Maryland's quality of life.

Kate Tully, Ph.D.

University of Maryland

Dr. Kate Tully is an Assistant Professor of Agroecology in the Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture at the University of Maryland. Her research assesses the sustainability of food production systems by examining their effects on interactions among plants, soils, carbon, nutrients, and water cycles. Her work examines how to balance farm productivity and ecosystem services. Along with collaborators at the USDA, she studies how cover crops can promote efficient on-farm nutrient cycling, sequester carbon, and improve water quality. Dr. Tully also serves as the Community Coordinator for the Columbia Heights Green, a quarter-acre urban farm in northwest Washington, D.C. Previously, she worked at Columbia University's Earth Institute and the Agriculture and Food Security Center. Her research work at Columbia took her to Kenya and Tanzania where she studied the effects of increased fertilizer application in smallholder farming systems. Dr. Tully received her Ph.D. in Ecology from the University of Virginia.

MARYLAND LEGISLATURE

The Honorable Jason C. Gallion

Maryland State Senate, District 35

Elected to the Maryland Senate in 2018, Senator Jason Gallion represents District 35, covering Harford and Cecil counties. He sits on the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee as well as its subcommittees on health and the environment and the Joint Subcommittee on Program Open Space and Agricultural Land Preservation. Senator Gallion owns a beef cattle and hay operation in Harford County where he has served as the agricultural specialist for the county since 2016. He is a member of the Nutrient Management Advisory Committee and the Harford County Farm Bureau. Senator Gallion lives with his family on a farm in Level, Maryland where he has been an active member of the Volunteer Fire Company for 25 years.

The Honorable Dana Stein

Maryland House of Delegates, District 11

Delegate Dana Stein represents District 11 which covers a large portion of Baltimore County. He was elected to the House of Delegates in 2006 and currently serves as Vice Chair of the Environment and Transportation Committee and Chair of the Environment Subcommittee. Delegate Stein has long been concerned about the impacts of climate change and sponsored the legislation creating the Maryland Healthy Soils Program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture. Senator Stein is the executive director and founder of Civic Works, a nationally-recognized "Urban Peace Corps" that transforms the lives of young adults through community service. Prior to establishing Civic Works, Delegate Stein practiced law at Squire, Sanders & Dempsey in Washington, D.C. He has a B.A. in Government from Harvard University, a law degree from Columbia Law School, and a master's degree in Public Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Lori Arguelles

Director of Policy Engagement, COMPASS

As Director of Policy Engagement for COMPASS, Lori Arguelles connects scientists to decision makers in the United States, bridging the worlds of science and policy. Prior to joining COMPASS, she served as President and CEO of the Alice Ferguson Foundation. Her 25 years of experience in executive management, public relations, and government relations included positions as Vice President of Media and Policy Strategy for the marine conservation non-profit organization SeaWeb, founding President and CEO of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Director of Communications for Girl Scouts of the USA, and Director of Public and Constituent Affairs for the U.S. Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Additionally, Ms. Arguelles has worked for several news outlets as an anchor, reporter, and producer and served as press secretary for two members of Congress. She received her undergraduate degree in Broadcast Journalism and Political Science from Northern Arizona University and her M.A. in Public Communication from American University.

Phillip Bogdonoff

Biodiversity for a Livable Climate

Philip Bogdonoff helped construct carbon cycle models while at Cornell University in the late 1980s, served as a consultant in the World Bank's Environment Group, and has participated in a variety of local, state, and international environmental initiatives. For the last five years he has served with BLC, whose mission is to promote the power of the natural world to stabilize the climate and to restore biodiversity to ecosystems worldwide. BCL collaborates with organizations around the world to advocate for the restoration of soil, grassland, forest, wetland, coastal and ocean ecosystems – along with the associated carbon, water and nutrient cycles – to draw down excess atmospheric greenhouse gases, cool the biosphere, and reverse global warming. He is part of the steering committee for the Takoma Alliance for Local Living Economy (TALLE), and is involved in Montgomery County's Climate Action Planning as a member of the Adaptation and Sequestration Workgroup.

Cleo Braver

Maryland Pesticide Education Network

A board member and representative of the Pesticide Education Network, Cleo Braver formerly served as General Counsel for a publicly traded company that engineered and built pollution control capital equipment. Ms. Braver and her husband have lived on Cottingham Farm in Talbot County for more than 20 years, where they grow certified organic vegetables and herbs, pastured heritage hogs, and layers for grocers, restaurants, and the public. The farm's regenerative agricultural practices include pastured animal production, reduced tillage, rotation with the integration of animals and cover crops, and the elimination of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

Alan Girard

Eastern Shore Director, Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Alan Girard oversees environmental protection and restoration programs on Maryland's Eastern Shore, where he leads the organization's regional efforts to help communities reduce pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Since joining CBF in 2001, Mr. Girard has developed public policy, coordinated advocacy campaigns, and engaged citizens, businesses, and government in work needed to clean up waterways. Mr. Girard completed his undergraduate work at Ithaca College and holds a Master's Degree in Environmental Management from Indiana University. Before joining CBF, he was a manager at Pickering Creek Audubon Center and has performed conservation work in Indiana, Montana, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Mr. Girard serves on a number of boards and committees and lives with his family in Easton, Maryland.

Lisa Garfield

Future Harvest CASA

Lisa Garfield has a dozen years of farming experience and is the owner/operator of Calliope Farm, a diversified vegetable farm on the Maryland portion of the Delmarva Peninsula. In 2014, after hosting several university research projects on her farm, participating in a Johnny's Seeds breeding trial, and completing two of her own SARE funded on-farm projects, she succumbed to the promise that research could provide "all of the fun, with none of the risk," of farming, and pursued an M.S. in Plant and Soil Science from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. She still keeps a garden and has plans to transition her farm to a food forest model. Ms. Garfield serves as the Million Acre Challenge Manager at Future Harvest and heads up the Soil Health Benchmark Study and other soil-health focused programs. In addition to her M.S., Ms. Garfield holds a B.A. in English Literature.

Tim Rosen

ShoreRivers

Tim Rosen manages ShoreRivers' Agriculture and Restoration Department. He partners with academic, state, and federal agencies to advance research on agricultural best management practices, manages restoration projects, completes watershed assessments, and works with farmers and landowners to reduce land-based pollution. Mr. Rosen majored in biology and minored in environmental studies at Mount St. Mary's University. He earned his master's degree in Watershed Hydrology at Louisiana State University.

###

Updated 12/15/20