



*Little Rhody
Big Conservation*

Bios

Speakers

Peter August

Professor of Natural Resources in the Department of Natural Resources Science at the University of Rhode Island

Dr. August received his Ph.D. degree (Biology) from Boston University in 1981. In 1985, he joined the URI Department of Natural Resources Science to begin development of a Geographic Information System (GIS) database in a cooperative project involving the University and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. He established the Environmental Data Center (EDC) in the Department of Natural Resources Science to serve as the Center of Technical Excellence in Rhode Island for GIS information processing and data distribution. As Director of the URI Coastal Institute from 2000 to 2009, Dr. August was responsible for developing programs and activities that assist in the creation of solutions to environmental problems in coastal ecosystems. Dr. August's research interests are landscape ecology, conservation biology, GIS, and coastal ecosystem management. He teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in environmental applications of GIS and various courses in applied ecology. He has published over 100 papers in journals, book chapters, and conference proceedings. He serves as a science advisor or board member of The Rhode Island Natural History Survey, The Nature Conservancy, The Watch Hill Conservancy, The Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, and the Richmond Land Trust.

Janet Coit

Director of RI's Department of Environmental Management

Janet L. Coit has worked for over 20 years on environmental matters. Before coming to the Department of Environmental Management, she worked for 10 years at The Nature Conservancy, one of the world's leading environmental nonprofits. She most recently served as that organization's Rhode Island state director, where she oversaw some of Rhode Island's largest land conservation projects. Prior to joining The Nature Conservancy, she was counsel and environmental coordinator in the Providence office of the late Senator John Chafee and, subsequently, then-Senator Lincoln Chafee. She moved to Rhode Island in 1997, making a transition from her position as counsel to the US Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works, where she worked on national environmental policy.

Director Coit has been a champion for the environment throughout her decades of environmental and legal service, including stints at the Department of the Interior, Department of Justice, and working for three U.S. Senators from New England. Clean water, clean air and

our natural areas provide for an environment that supports Rhode Island's economic future, and Director Coit is dedicated to preserving the quality of our environment and protecting the natural systems critical to the health, safety and well-being of Rhode Islanders as she leads the Department.

A magna cum laude graduate of Dartmouth College, Director Coit holds a J.D. from Stanford Law School, where she was president of the Environmental Law Society and a member of the Environmental Law Journal. She enjoys spending time outdoors, learning about nature and people, and exploring Rhode Island's waterways, historic sites, and wild places. She is married with two children and lives in the East Bay area.

Earl Garber

President of the National Association of Conservation Districts

Earl Garber is a licensed crop consultant and rice, soybean and hay producer from Louisiana. He started his involvement in conservation as a Soil Scientist, Soil Conservationist and District Conservationist with the USDA. He has been active on the Acadia Soil and Water Conservation District board of supervisors, in Southwestern Louisiana, since 1981. Earl recently served as the President of the Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts. He also held the position of Louisiana Board Member for the National Association of Conservation Districts before being elected to serve as an Officer.

Earl has his own farming operation which includes 550 acres of rice, soybeans, grain sorghum, timber and commercial hay production. Earl also provides daily service to area producers as a Louisiana licensed crop consultant and field services manager for G&H Seed Co. Earl and his wife, Janis Landry, live and farm in the Northwestern portion of Acadia parish, Louisiana.

C. Wayne Honeycutt, Ph.D.

Deputy Chief for Science and Technology, USDA-NRCS

Dr. Wayne Honeycutt received his Bachelor's degree in Forestry and Master's degree in Soil Science from the University of Kentucky, and his Ph.D. in Soil Genesis from Colorado State University. He served as a Research Soil Scientist for 14 years and a Research Leader for 10 years at the USDA-ARS New England Plant, Soil, and Water Laboratory where he conducted research on carbon and nitrogen cycling, soil health, and development of sustainable cropping systems. He has authored or co-authored over 75 publications in peer reviewed scientific journals and 5 book chapters. He has served as the Deputy Chief for Science and Technology with USDA-NRCS in Washington, DC since 2010.

Christopher Modisette

RI State Resource Conservationist and State Forester, USDA-NRCS

In this capacity, Mr. Modisette has responsibility for sharing in the planning, development and implementation of comprehensive soil, water, forest and resource conservation programs for the state. He works with conservation partners to assist landowners to improve the forest, wildlife, and water resources of our state.

Previously, he was the Executive Director of the Southern New England Forest Consortium, Inc. (SNEFCI) and Director of Water Resources/Watershed Manager for the Providence Water Supply Board. He has served as a guest lecturer in Forestry with the Department of Natural Resources Science at the University of Rhode Island. He is NRCS' member on the RIDEM State

Forest Assessment Team, State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee, Forest Legacy Committee, Farm, Forest & Open Space Valuation Subcommittee, and Southern New England Heritage Forest Project. He represents RI NRCS on the NE/NY Forestry Initiative and meetings of the NE/NY State Foresters and State Conservationists.

Modisette currently serves as a liaison to the Rhode Island RC&D Council, RI Coverts Project, and RI Tree Farm Committee. He has been a member of the Society of American Foresters since 1979, and is involved on the boards of a variety of forestry and conservation organizations and advisory committees across the state and region.

Modisette is the recipient of the Ernest M. Gould, Jr. Technology Transfer Award from the New England Society of American Foresters (2011), the Outstanding Forester Award from the Yankee Division Society of American Foresters (2001) the New England RC&D Council's Chuck McCarty Outstanding (RC&D) Coordinator Award, 2011 and the 2010 Northern RI Conservation District Educator of the Year. Modisette lives in Scituate, Rhode Island where he is the past Chair of the Conservation Commission and former member of the Scituate Land Trust.

Patricia Sueck

Northeast Regional Chairperson, NACD

Born in Washington DC, Patricia went to St. Joseph Hospital in Baltimore, where she earned her RN. While working at the hospital she met Elmer and they were married in 1956.

Pat and Elmer moved to a farm in Airville, Pennsylvania in 1969 with their 5 children, a cat and dog (our only livestock at the time). Over the years they raised pigs, until the market dropped out, now they have Hereford cows and raise corn and soybeans.

Learning about farming came from the 4-H program and subsequently Pat became a 4-H leader.

Joining Farm Bureau, Pat became involved in speaking out for the Farmer and the critical issues at the State & National legislatures.

Pat is a past board member of York County Farm Bureau, and Past President of PA Association of Conservation Districts. Pat serves on York County Conservation District, PACD's Executive Board, NACD's Board and is currently the NACD Regional Chair

R. Phou Vongkhamdy

Rhode Island State Conservationist, USDA-NRCS

R. Phou Vongkhamdy has worked in the capacity since 2009 where he has continued the agency's work in conservation by largely expanding the number of conservation contracts through financial and technical assistance to farmers and forest land owners. Prior to his appointment as State Conservationist, he spent a productive three and a half years as Assistant State Conservationist of Field Operations in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Vongkhamdy's career with NRCS began as a Soil Conservationist Trainee while still in college where he graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Soil Science from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. After graduating, he was promoted to a Soil Conservationist and then District Conservationist where he worked at several field and county offices in Minnesota. He also served as the Minnesota State Outreach Coordinator where he assisted field office staff working with underserved and socially disadvantaged customers including Tribal governments.

Vongkhamdy was promoted to Assistant State Conservationist of Field Operations in Oklahoma where he oversaw 19 county field offices. During his tenure, he utilized communication and teamwork skills with underserved customers which resulted in the largest number of contracts accepted in the Nation for a Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). He received the Secretary of Agriculture's Annual Honor Award for Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights due to his efforts providing outstanding outreach in conservation to traditionally underserved and limited resource customers including Native Americans and Asians.

Vongkhamdy was born and raised on a family farm in Laos where he farmed rice, tobacco, silk worms, sugar cane, and vegetables. In the 1980s, he escaped from the Laotian communist regime and lived in a refugee camp in Thailand before immigrating to St. Cloud, Minnesota where he was sponsored by the Catholic Church and lived with a foster family. Growing up on a family farm, his cultural values are based on "living off the land". Vongkhamdy said, "It is a great honor to work with land owners who see the importance and value of taking care of our natural resources."

Jason Weller

Chief, USDA-NRCS

Jason Weller has served as Chief of NRCS since July 2013. As Chief, he oversees programs that help protect the environment, preserve our natural resources and improve agricultural sustainability through voluntary, private-lands conservation. He leads a staff of 11,500 employees across the country and manages a budget of about \$4 billion.

From December 2012 to July 2013, Jason served as Acting Chief of NRCS. Before assuming this role, he served as Acting Associate Chief for Conservation and as Chief of Staff where he worked alongside Chief Dave White and the agency's national and state leaders to plan and implement strategic conservation initiatives and conduct the annual business operations of the agency.

Prior to joining NRCS, Jason served as a staff member for the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture where he provided oversight and crafted bills to fund USDA programs and activities. He also served on the U.S. House Budget Committee where he helped construct the annual congressional budget for agriculture, environment and energy programs. Before that, Jason worked with the White House Office of Management and Budget where he assisted with the development and implementation of the budget for USDA conservation programs.

Before coming to Washington, DC, Jason worked for several years with the California State Legislature where he provided fiscal and policy recommendations on a variety of natural resource conservation and environmental protection issues.

Jason is a native of northern California. He earned his undergraduate degree from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, and a graduate degree in public policy from the University of Michigan.

Jason and his wife have two young daughters and live in Maryland.

Break-Out Session Presenters

Molly Allard

Environmental Education and Outreach Coordinator for the Northern RI Conservation District

Molly Allard is an environmental educator who is experienced in communicating concepts related to stormwater pollution to children, adults, and the general public. As the Environmental Education and Outreach Coordinator for Northern Rhode Island Conservation District and the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Education Program, Molly works with schools and communities throughout Northern Rhode Island to educate children and adults about how they can keep their water clean by being careful about what they put on the ground. Molly is also working with several partners to install rain gardens and other stormwater best management practices in North Scituate, RI as part of the Section 319-funded Village of North Scituate Low Impact Development Retrofit and Education Project. Before joining NRICD, Molly studied Wetland, Watershed, and Ecosystem Science at the University of Rhode Island and has also worked as a classroom teacher for early childhood and middle school students.

Kate Bousquet

District Manager and Land Use Planner of the Southern RI Conservation District

Kate has served as SRICD's District Manager since September 2013. Kate earned a BS in Soil & Water Resources, with a minor in International Development, from the University of Rhode Island in 2000. Her working environments have ranged from federal to private, local & state entities to international organizations.

Over the course of her career, Kate has cultivated a multitude of skills as a Grazing Specialist, Technical Writer, Outreach & Education Coordinator, and Farm Conservation Planner; all with the mission to improve the protection and best uses of natural resources throughout the State of RI. Over the last year, SRICD has worked on various projects to improve public access and conservation on public lands.

Gary Casabona

RI State Biologist, USDA-NRCS

Gary Casabona holds a B.S. in Environmental Sciences from Rutgers University, and a M.S. in Wildlife Biology from Virginia Tech. He worked for USDA-NRCS in New Jersey for 14 years before moving to Rhode Island in 2011 as the statewide wildlife biologist for NRCS. Gary's current activities include habitat projects for New England cottontail, native pollinators, scrub/shrub birds, wetland restoration, fish passage, and oyster restoration.

Michael Brown

Executive Director of the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA)

Mike has served as the Executive Director of NASCA since October, 2010. In 1981 he graduated from West Virginia University with a B.S. in Wildlife Resource Management. In 2004 Mike graduated from Wilmington University with an M.S. in Organizational Leadership. Mike worked for the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control from 2001 through 2010 where he managed Delaware's Nonpoint Source Program and served as the State's District Operations Section Administrator. Mike worked for the Delaware Department

of Agriculture from 1982 through 2001, where his primary responsibilities were forest management on private lands, state lands management, fire control, and policy planning.

Paul Dolan

Area Director RI Resource Conservation & Development Council

Chairman of the Board, Northern RI Conservation District

For 36 years Paul Dolan has been a forester, on many levels, for the State of Rhode Island. He retired from state service as the Deputy State Forester where he was responsible for all grants, programs and use of state forestry lands in the absence of the state forester. Paul was in charge of documenting all forest fire activity throughout the state. From 1999-2005 Mr. Dolan served as the Coordinator of RI Urban and Community Forest Program, where he worked with cities and towns on Tree City USA and to help administer the America the Beautiful grants. Since his retirement he has served as the Area Director of RI RC&D Council, where he is responsible for handling all their grants.

Gina DeMarco

District Manager of the Northern RI Conservation District

Gina DeMarco has been District Manager of the Northern RI Conservation District (NRICD) since 1991. She has helped develop several outreach and education programs focusing on nurturing behavior changes in the community that are aimed to result in stormwater impact and non-point source pollution reduction. She also teaches watershed basics. Gina has written several Church Leader Guides for the NACD Stewardship Committee.

Kelly Gill

Pollinator Conservation Specialist, The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

Partner Biologist, USDA-NRCS, Mid-Atlantic and Northeast Regions

Kelly is the Pollinator Conservation Specialist for the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation and a Partner Biologist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast Regions. She provides technical support to NRCS staff, farmers, and landowners for implementing Farm Bill practices to conserve pollinators and other beneficial insects. This technical support includes planning, installing, and managing pollinator habitat on farms and in natural areas. Kelly's also works with agency staff and research partners on the development of technical materials and outreach activities to guide pollinator conservation efforts. A Pennsylvania native, Kelly completed her Master's Degree in Entomology at Iowa State University. She conducted small plot and farm scale research, collaborating with organic and conventional farmers, on the development of best practices for conserving beneficial insects in agricultural landscapes.

Wayne Honeycutt

Deputy Chief of Science and Technology, NRCS

See page 2 for his bio.

Christopher Modisette

RI Resource Conservationist and State Forester, USDA-NRCS

See page 2 for his bio.

Kate Sayles

Forestry and Agriculture Technician for the Northern RI Conservation District

Kate Sayles graduated with a B.S. in Wildlife and Conservation Biology from the University of Rhode Island in 2008. Following her graduation, Kate was employed by the RI Tree Council and worked on several urban forestry projects, including the Champion Tree Program, the Asian Longhorned Beetle Project, comprehensive street tree surveys and storm damage assessments throughout the state. Kate's current activities include writing farm conservation plans, providing outreach and technical assistance to forestland owners and agricultural producers, and serving as the project manager for Snake Den Farm.

Susan Schultz

NACD Education & Stewardship Specialist, Marketplace Manager

For over 35 years Susan has been involved in the conservation family across Indiana, the U.S. and abroad. Grass root efforts have been a key to the successful projects she has worked on. Susan has been working since March 2006 with the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). (Headquartered in Washington DC) Susan works with the Stewardship & Education program, poster and photo contest, NACD Marketplace and other conservation projects.

Many of the projects under Susan's direction have received local, state and national awards. Susan received the IPL Golden Eagle Environmental Professional of the Year award in 2002 for her long-term work in the field, Project Learning Tree national outstanding educator finalist and Project Learning Tree Gold Star Award.

Kathryn Zuromski

Biologist & GIS Technician for the Southern RI Conservation District

As SRICD's staff biologist and GIS technician, Kathryn works closely with private and municipal Land Trusts and Conservation Commissions to develop the accessibility and usability of public lands through GIS Trail mapping and wetland delineations.

Kathryn has worked with the RI RC&D as the project manager for RI's River and Stream Continuity Project. She assisted in creating the "RI Resource Management Guide" used to assist agricultural producers in conservation planning. Additionally, Kathryn assisted RI NRCS in Nutrient Management Planning, and participated in RI Coverts Program.

She is a graduate of University of RI with a Masters in Environmental Science and a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife and Conservation Biology. Kathryn previously held positions at the RI State Conservation Committee, New England Institute Water Pollution Control Commission and RI Department of Environmental Management, Division of Fish and Wildlife.

RI Association of Conservation Districts' Leadership

Jean Lynch

Vice President, RIACD

Jean Lynch is on the board of directors for the Northern RI Conservation District, Vice President of the RI Association of Conservation Districts, the National Association of Conservation Districts' RI delegate, and a member on their Legislative Committee.

Jean is a retired business woman who is dedicated to working on water issues. She is presently one of the 1998 founding board members of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, an award winning American Heritage River. She is also on the Citizens Advisory Committee for the Narragansett Bay Commission, the largest wastewater treatment facility in RI.

As the 1st Secretary for the Town of Johnston, RI Wastewater Management Board, in 2003 Jean received a citation from the State of RI House of Representatives in recognition of her tireless and outstanding service helping to establish this board.

Dick Went

President, RIACD

Secretary/Treasurer, NACD

Dick Went, is a retired school teacher of 29 years, as well as a retired remodeling contractor. He is actively involved in conservation at the local, state and national levels.

Dick has served as President of the Rhode Island Association of Conservation Districts since 2008. He is also a board member of the Northern Rhode Island Conservation District; and a member of the Rhode Island Forest Conservators Organization; the Rhode Island Farm, Forest, and Open Space Committee; the Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership; and the Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association. Before his election to a national officer in 2013, Dick served as the Rhode Island Board Member of NACD.

Dick and his wife, Deborah, currently reside on an American Tree Farm in Foster, RI, where they engage in a number of NRCS conservation practices, including timber stand Improvement, the creation of forest trails and landings, and wildlife habitat cuts. They are also active participants in the Conservation Stewardship Program.