



2023 Environmental Summit Panel Speaker Bios

PANEL: Forests and Habitat

Susan Masino

Susan A. Masino is the Vernon D. Roosa Professor of Applied Science at Trinity College, a member of the Science and Technology Working Group of the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3), the Hartford County Coordinator for the Old Growth Forest Network, and recently a Charles Bullard Fellow in Forest Research at Harvard Forest/Harvard Medical School. Her laboratory-based research focuses on mechanisms of brain health and disease, and her scholarship outside the lab focuses on nature and brain health, the natural processes that define the ecological value of forests, and science-based, common-sense strategies to mitigate climate change, support community health, and protect all species.

Amy Paterson

Amy Paterson joined the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) in 2010 as its first Executive Director. She co-chairs the State of Connecticut Natural Heritage, Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Review Board. She was a member of the Environment Committee for the Lamont/Bysiewicz Administration transition team, the Forests Sub-Group of the Governor's Council on Climate Change, and the Policy on Resilient Forests for Connecticut's Future (PRFCT Future) Working Group. Amy is a member of the Working Lands Alliance Steering Committee and the Board of Directors of the Keney Park Sustainability Project. Prior to CLCC, Amy worked for The Trust for Public Land. She worked over twenty years as a land use attorney, and served as a staff lawyer with the U.S. Department of Justice.

Dr. Mayra Rodríguez González

Dr. Mayra Rodríguez González is an Urban Community Forestry educator at the University of Connecticut. Dr. Rodríguez holds a doctorate's degree from Purdue University's Department of Forestry and Natural Resources and a bachelor's in natural sciences from the University of Puerto Rico in Bayamón. Her work encompasses the realm of environmental justice and urban environmental management. Dr. Rodríguez has worked with cities and towns throughout the United States to assess the access of tree canopy and its benefits by minoritized communities. She has also supported the development of tree planting plans to alleviate inequities in access. Currently, she partners with CT organizations to promote community-engaged programs on the benefits of urban trees.

Eric Hammerling

Eric Hammerling has been Executive Director for the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) since 2008. Eric is the lead advocate for CFPA on forest, park, trail, and open space issues before the CT General Assembly. He Chaired the State Vegetation Management Task Force (2012), Forests Sub-Group of the Governor's Council on Climate Change (2020), and the working group that published the Policy on Resilient Forests for Connecticut's Future (PRFCT Future) in 2021. Eric serves on the Board of the CT Land Conservation Council, CT Outdoor Recreation Alliance, CT Urban Forest Council, and Connwood Foresters, Inc., and on the Steering Committee of the Working Lands Alliance.

PANEL: Protecting Wildlife

Rob Lafrance

Rob Lafrance has his JD from the Quinnipiac University School of Law and his BA from the University of Arizona. He was formerly the Director of Governmental Affairs for DEEP. He is currently the Director of Policy for the National Audubon Society. He serves as the commissioner and former vice-chair of the town of Clinton's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission. He is a 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)

Christine Cummings

Christine Cummings, Director and Co-Founder of A Place Called Hope, raptor rehabilitation and education center since 2007. Christine has been a Federally Permitted and State appointed Wildlife Rehabilitator for Predatory Birds of Prey since 2005. With a background as a veterinary technician and having always worked in the field of animals, Christine continues to strive to help lessen the everyday conflicts our wildlife faces within our very own backyards through educational, live bird encounters. "Hope is a thing with feathers..."

Louise Washer

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

Nicole Rivard

Nicole Rivard is the editor-in-chief and a Media/Government Relations Manager. Nicole started working at Friends of Animals in 2013. She brings 27 years of journalism experience to FoA's *Action Line* and to the front lines— protesting and documenting atrocities against animals exploited by the fur, hunting & entertainment industries, as well as the Bureau of Land Management's mismanagement of America's wild horses. Nicole also helps direct FoA's legislative outreach. She enjoys photography, wildlife watching and wild places. But her happiest place is with horses at New Canaan Mounted Troop, her home away from home.

Annie Hornish

Annie Hornish is the Connecticut State Director for The Humane Society of the United States, a former Connecticut state representative (62nd), and owner of certified-organic Evergreen Farm in Suffield. She holds a Bachelor of Science from UConn's College of Agriculture, a certification in cytotechnology, and a Master of Business Administration.

PANEL: Energy & Climate

Charles Rothenberger

As Save the Sound's in-house Climate and Energy Attorney, Charles focuses on climate policy and legislation to ensure clean air and a robust green economy for Connecticut. With more than 15 years of experience working on environmental, energy, and land issues, Charles is well versed in lobbying before the CT General Assembly, and appearing before state agencies and municipal boards and commissions in regulatory proceedings. Prior to joining Save the Sound, he served as law clerk at the Connecticut Appellate Court. He holds a JD from the UConn School of Law and an MA in public policy from Trinity College, and has been admitted to the Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts bars.

Nathan M. Frohling

Nathan Frohling is The Nature Conservancy's Director of External Affairs. He leads federal and state government relations for the Chapter and oversees its climate and energy policy work. Passage of CT's law committing the state to a zero-carbon electricity supply by 2040 is a highlight of his legislative work. Nathan's leadership on the Long Island Sound Blue Plan helped achieve legislative adoption of this precedent-setting measure in 2021. Believing that engaging the business community in advocacy for important climate and clean energy legislation, Nathan launched the CT Energy Future Initiative. As an active member of the State's Commission on Environmental Standards Nathan is helping assure the viability of offshore renewable wind energy by also assuring marine life is protected in the process.

Samantha Dynowski

Samantha Dynowski joined Sierra Club Connecticut as the State Director in August 2018. Sierra Club is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization with Chapters around the United States. Samantha works with Sierra Club Connecticut's dedicated volunteers advocating for just and equitable solutions to the climate crisis, to reduce pollution, protect wildlife, and eliminate threats to air, water and land. Prior to joining the Sierra Club, she was Director of Advocacy and Outreach at the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. When not advocating for a livable planet for all, Samantha can be found hiking, gardening, cooking and more.

PANEL: Solutions to Waste

Kevin Budris

Kevin Budris is a co-founder and Senior Counsel & Program Director at Just Zero, a non-profit organization that works alongside communities, policy makers, organizers, and others to implement just and equitable solutions to our waste crisis. Prior to Just Zero, Kevin was a Senior Attorney in the Zero Waste Program at Conservation Law Foundation and previously worked at the National Environmental Law Center, where he brought citizen enforcement lawsuits against polluting landfills and incinerators.

Jeanine Behr Getz

Jeanine Behr Getz has successfully worked and excelled in sales, marketing, product development/innovation, communication, and education careers primarily focused in the healthcare, environmental and advocacy sectors since graduating college in 1987. She currently serves as Chair and Founder of BYOCT. She was a past crew member & current Ambassador of eXXpedition, an all women science and sailing research mission to study the impacts of plastic pollution on our oceans and bring that data to communities to advocate for land based solutions. She is a council member for Women in Conservation. She is a community advocate for Greening our Children, an education outreach on the chemicals of concern in personal care and consumer products that can negatively impact children's health.

Ann Gadwah

Ann Gadwah is the Advocacy and Outreach Coordinator at Sierra Club Connecticut. She was raised in the mountains of the Western Massachusetts, Ann's heart has always been with nature and the environment, which has translated into activism and a career in public policy. Beginning in 2018, she served as both the Political and Chapter Chair of Sierra Club Connecticut. She has been on staff as an organizer and lobbyist since 2021, working to help implement good environmental policy and engage supporters in the movement. Her passions include environmental justice, ecosystem and wildlife preservation, zero waste, and outings. She currently resides in New Hartford with her husband, son, dog, three cats, and four chickens.