

Leadership Remarks



Kevin Norton
Acting Deputy Undersecretary
USDA Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC)

Acting Deputy Under Secretary Kevin Norton has served in a variety of key leadership roles within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Prior to serving as the Acting Deputy Under Secretary for the Farm Production and Conservation mission area, Kevin was the Acting Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency he has served for 39 years. Prior to these acting assignments, Kevin served as the Associate Chief for NRCS since 2018. His expertise covered oversight of the agency's programs, technology and administrative operations, along with national direction and oversight for the agency's financial and technical assistance programs delivered through agency Regional Conservationists and Deputy Chiefs in support of over 3,000 state and field operations across the United States and territories.

Additionally, Kevin served 12 years as the NRCS State Conservationist in Louisiana. He began his NRCS career in 1981 as a Range Conservationist in Lawton, Oklahoma after graduating from Oklahoma State University. His career spanned multiple agency organizational levels within Oklahoma prior to moving to Louisiana. He has also served in key positions and support roles for the agency and in support of producers and partners adoption and delivery of voluntary, field-based conservation. Additionally, he supported House and Senate Agriculture Committee members and staff in designing the 2014 and 2018 conservation titles of each Farm Bill, during lengthy agency details.

Kevin was raised in south central Oklahoma on a diverse agricultural setting of irrigated peanuts, cotton, watermelons, small grains, and livestock. Kevin and his wife Cheri have four grown children and five grandchildren. Kevin enjoys taking his grandchildren fishing and spending as much time with them as possible.



Jacqueline Davis-Slay
Acting Director
USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE)

In 2019, Mrs. Jacqueline A. Davis-Slay assumed the position of Deputy Director for the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE). The office was established to rapidly expand outreach to America's agricultural community and facilitate greater access to USDA programs.

In addition, OPPE serves as the lead agent for USDA partnership and outreach activities with tasking and reporting authority to direct, coordinate and control all target programs. She has over 20 years of Federal service with experience in legislative and policy development, statistical analysis, fiscal and program management, service delivery and marketing, with a particular interest in developing innovative partnerships and opportunities to assist vulnerable communities, populations, and socially disadvantaged, beginning and limited resource producers. Prior to OPPE, Mrs. Davis-Slay served as Director for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Office of Public and Private Partnerships. This office provides vision, expertise, and leadership to build NRCS' public-private partnership program to advance conservation activities through strategic coordination and planning with other USDA agencies, customers, stakeholders and agricultural industries. She also held the positions of USDA Senior Policy Advisor for the StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity Initiative and Legislative Director for the Rural Development mission area, providing legislative guidance and direction for over 42 programs in three agencies.

In 2009, she served as Legislative Specialist for USDA's Office of Congressional Relationship where she was one the primary liaison between the United States Congress and USDA. She spent most of her career with NRCS, serving in a multitude of positions, such as Legislative Affairs Branch Chief, Acting State Conservationist, Program Manager, Program Analyst and Special Assistant. A native of Port Gibson, MS, Mrs. Davis-Slay attained her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Alcorn State University in Agricultural Economics. She is married to Denmark V. Slay and the mother of one son, Denmark V. Slay, II.



Dr. Barbara Glenn, Ph.D.

Chief Executive Officer

National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA)

Dr. Barbara Glenn joined the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) as CEO in 2014. NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries, and directors of the departments of agriculture in all fifty states and four U.S. territories. Dr. Glenn is a scientist with decades of experience as a researcher, policy leader and advocate for agriculture. She previously held leadership positions with CropLife America and the Biotechnology Innovation Organization in Washington, DC. Earlier in her career she led governmental affairs for the Federation of Animal Science Societies. For 17 years, she conducted dairy cattle nutrition research for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. She was the first woman to serve as president of the American Society of Animal Science. Dr. Glenn holds a B.S. in animal science and a Ph.D. in ruminant nutrition from the University of Kentucky. Born in Lincoln, Nebraska and raised in Centerville, Ohio, Dr. Glenn developed a passion for agriculture from her parents and her involvement in 4-H. The Glenn's have three grown children who are 4-H alumni and live on a small farm in Maryland. Barb serves on various local boards for farm bureau, 4-H and ag education.



Gerilee W. Bennett

Director, Interagency Coordination Division

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Recovery Directorate

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Gerilee W. Bennett is the Director of FEMA's Interagency Coordination Division within the Recovery Directorate. Ms. Bennett currently oversees the Recovery Support Function Leadership Group and the Interagency Recovery Coordination field cadre and operations. She managed the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration, and was responsible for leading the development and implementation of the National Disaster Recovery Framework, published September 2011. She has supported an array of disaster assistance operations from headquarters and field offices, including the COVID-19 pandemic, 2017 hurricanes, 2016 Louisiana Flooding and Hurricane Matthew, Hurricanes Isaac and Sandy in 2012, the 2010 Gulf Coast oil spill, the 2004 and 2005 Hurricanes, and the 2001 World Trade Center attacks. Ms. Bennett completed a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and German at the University of Idaho. She later earned a Master of Arts in Security Studies at the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security.

Building Resilience in Agricultural and Food Systems through Strategic and Innovative Partnerships

Panel 1 – Innovative Partnerships Between State/Local Partners to Support Resilient Food Systems



Bryan Hurlburt
Commissioner
Connecticut Department of Agriculture

Governor Ned Lamont appointed Bryan P. Hurlburt the 20th Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture in March 2019. Commissioner Hurlburt oversees the department operations and is responsible for programs regarding aquaculture, farmland preservation, agricultural marketing and viability programs, regulatory oversight, and animal control. Connecticut's agricultural economy generates nearly \$4 billion to the state's economy, consists of 5,500 small businessmen and women, operating on approximately 400,000 acres of land, and over 50,000 acres in Long Island Sound.

Before being named Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Bryan P. Hurlburt was the executive director of the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association – the state's largest and oldest agricultural organization. In this role, he advocated on behalf of its members to promote policies that enhance the economic viability of agriculture in the state.

Prior to joining the Farm Bureau, Hurlburt worked as senior vice president of program operations at Wholesome Wave, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Bridgeport, CT that is dedicated to empowering underserved consumers to make healthier food choices by making fresh fruits and vegetables more affordable.

In 2013, he was appointed by President Barack Obama to serve as the Connecticut State Executive Director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency in a position where he was responsible for overseeing the agency's crop protection, disaster relief, and loan programs. He instituted a program to use the agency's six field offices to better serve Connecticut farmers and help them navigate the different state, federal, and local programs that are available to help them and their farm operation.

From 2007 to 2013, Hurlburt was elected to four terms in office as state representative for the 53rd district of Ashford, Tolland, and Willington. During his tenure, he focused on agricultural and environment policy, and was widely recognized as a leader on these issues by various organizations. While in office, he created and chaired the legislature's Rural Caucus, consisting of rural leaders in each party from the Senate and House and advocating on behalf of those communities. Immediately prior to being elected, he worked for two years as a policy aide to Speaker of the House Jim Amann. Hurlburt graduated from the University of Connecticut with a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration.



Louis Aspey
Deputy Chief for Management and Strategy
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Interim Director, USDA Office of Urban Agriculture, and Innovative Production (OUAIP)

Louis Aspey is the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Deputy Chief for Management and Strategy. In this role, he provides corporate leadership across workload analysis, budget formulation, outreach and partnerships, strategic support services and urban agriculture.

Before coming to National Headquarters, Louis was the State Conservationist in West Virginia, where he led the implementation of programs that protected the environment, preserved natural resources and improved agricultural sustainability through voluntary, private-lands conservation. He has served in multiple leadership positions with NRCS and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over the course of his 29-year career.

Louis is a native of southwestern Pennsylvania. He earned an undergraduate degree in civil engineering from Geneva College and a graduate degree in public administration from American University. Louis and his wife, Karen, live in the Washington, D.C. metro area with their beloved dog Oatie.



Lee Cruz
 Director of Community Outreach
 Community Foundation for Greater New Haven

Lee Cruz connects nonprofit organizations, civic leaders, and the business community to create social and economic benefit. He is currently the Outreach Director at The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. Lee previously held the positions of Executive Director of the Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut, Connecticut's home-away-from-home for families of children in need of hospitalization, and Director of Community Development for Mutual Housing Association, a regional not-for-profit affordable housing developer. Lee also served as

León Director of the New Haven/León Sister City Project in León, Nicaragua, where he administered integrated sustainable development programs in health, education, agriculture, community development, and economic development. Lee is also a Co-founder of the Chatham Square Association, a group of organized residents, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses in Fair Haven working together to build and sustain community in their neighborhood. He lives in New Haven's Fair Haven neighborhood with his wife Sarah and two children, Pablo and Mateo.



Latha Swamy
 Director of Food System Policy
 City of New Haven, CT

Latha Swamy joined the City of New Haven as Director of Food System Policy in September 2018. In this role, Latha works to support and help manifest community-led efforts that envision and create an environmentally sustainable and socially just food system. To create this enabling environment for New Haven residents, Latha works on policy on the institutional, local, state, and federal levels. She is also an active leader in international processes that relate to urban food policy.

Outside of this role, Latha also serves as the Senior Advisor to the Chair of the Rockefeller Foundation Economic Council on Planetary Health, Dr. Ernesto Zedillo (former President of Mexico), at the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization. Her work broadly examines the relationship between environmental degradation and human health. Internationally, she has worked in Haiti, India, Nepal, and Indonesia to address the impacts of global environmental change at the intersection of health and agricultural systems.

She currently serves as the United Nations Ambassador for Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), chairs the Junior Board of EcoHealth Alliance (EHA), and sits on both the Working Lands Alliance (WLA) Steering Committee and Senator Chris Murphy's Land Conservation Council. She also trained in urban farming and food justice practices at Just Food NYC's Farm School. She holds a Master's of Environmental Management from Yale University, prior to which she pursued an M.D. and a Ph.D. in systems neuroscience at Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Panel 2 - Introduction



Gayle Norman Barry
Acting Associate Chief
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Gayle Norman Barry is currently the Acting Associate Chief for NRCS. She is a graduate of Montana State University with a degree in Organizational Communication and Business Management. She also attended Oregon State University in Environmental Science. She is a graduate of the Federal Executive Institute for government leadership and from American University in 2012 in the Senior Executive Service Developmental Program. Gayle has held many diverse leadership positions in the NRCS including Deputy State Conservationist for NRCS in California, Director of Legislative Affairs during the 2008 Farm Bill, Director of Public Affairs, Senior Executive--Deputy Chief for Management and Strategy, and Senior Executive-Regional Conservationist for 14 state conservationists in the Northeast. As Deputy State Conservationist, Gayle has leadership for operations leading over 300 diverse employees and managing a budget of over \$120 million annually.

Gayle has successfully worked with local, state and national level stakeholders to lead change on some of the agency's toughest conservation challenges. A few examples include the following: Klamath Basin and California Bay-Delta water and habitat protection; Pacific Northwest Salmon Habitat recovery; Great Lakes Restoration; enhancing agency-tribal relations; co-leading an innovation-focused revisioning effort called NRCS of the Future, and the agency/departmental agricultural component of the Chesapeake Bay recovery efforts.

Gayle believes passionately in developing and supporting a knowledgeable, diverse workforce. She has served as a strong mentor for numerous conservationists--especially for young women--and champions the CA Leadership Development Program. Gayle has also developed several national leadership development programs for the agency.

She is currently a partner in her family's small grain farming and cattle ranching operation in Bozeman, Montana. Gayle lives in Davis with her husband and 13-year old daughter and her extended family after spending 12 years in the DC area. Gayle has lived and worked in Montana, Oregon, Arizona, Washington D.C., and California with NRCS.

Panel 2: Strategic Partnerships in support of Resiliency in Disaster Recovery



Mark Scanlan
Senior Vice President, Agriculture & Rural Policy
Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA)

Mark Scanlan is the Senior Vice President, Agriculture & Rural Policy, for the Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA) and monitors legislative and regulatory issues related to agriculture and their impact on community banks serving rural America.

Mark is the Secretary for ICBA's Agriculture-Rural America Committee, a policy committee and sounding board for the association that includes over twenty bankers from every agricultural region of the United States.

Prior to joining ICBA, Mark worked for the Department of Agriculture in the Secretary's Office of Congressional Relations under Secretaries Yeutter and Madigan. Mark also worked on agricultural issues for Senator Bob Dole and previously worked for the Drovers Journal, a national livestock publication. Mark was raised on a registered Holstein dairy farm and is a graduate of Kansas State University.

ICBA exclusively represents over 50,000 community banks and bank branches by aggregating their voice for community banking interests in Washington to members of Congress and federal regulators. ICBA also provides community banks resources to enhance banker education, marketability, and profitability to help community banks compete in an ever-changing marketplace. ICBA's website: www.icba.org.



Esther Lin
Program Manager – Outreach
USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Esther is the program manager for the Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency Outreach Office. In this position, she supports the Farm Service Agency’s strategic engagement efforts of farmers, ranchers, and agricultural stakeholders. Her work includes developing tools that help field employees reach and build successful working relationships with new and underserved audiences, and strengthening partnerships across Federal, State, and community partners to promote equitable access to USDA’s programs.



Dr. Samuel Scott, Ph.D.
Executive Director
North-South Institute

The North-South Institute for International Business, Trade and Sustainable Systems (NSI) is a 501(c) 3 multidisciplinary group whose objective is to promote sustainable development systems and foster eco-economic development within an international business and trade framework. The Institute operates under the classification of a Community Based **think and do tank** funded as an Economic Research and Development Organization that works with

various agencies and offices providing training, technical assistance, outreach, resource mobilization, policy research and consultancy. These activities are conducted using a Community Based Participatory Research and Development Approach, targeting the developing sectors of the southern United States and emerging markets of selected countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia. The implementation strategy involves the empowerment and enhancement of the capabilities of individuals, organizations, and industry through education, training, consultancy, research and policy analysis, and asset acquisition towards the development of sustainable livelihoods and improved quality of life.



Dr. Moira McDonald, Ph.D.
Environment Program Director
Walton Family Foundation

Moira is Director of the Environment Program at the Walton Family Foundation. For the last 11 years, she led the foundation’s Mississippi River and coastal initiatives. Moira has more than 20 years’ experience in wetlands and freshwater conservation and previously managed Mississippi River and Great Lakes programs at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Moira received her undergraduate degree in environmental science and Russian studies from Brown University and has a master’s and a Ph.D. in geography from the University of Minnesota.



Commissioner Melissa McKinlay
 Palm Beach County, Florida
 National Association of Counties (NACo)

Palm Beach County Commissioner Melissa McKinlay was first elected to the Board of County Commissioners in 2014 and re-elected unopposed in 2018. She served as County Mayor from 2017-2018 and currently serves as President of the Florida Association of Counties, Vice Chair of the National Association of Counties' (NACo) Agriculture & Rural Affairs Policy Steering Committee and as a Member of the NACo Board of Directors.

Prior to her election, she spent nearly twenty years advocating on behalf of women, children, and families with the Palm Beach County Legislative Affairs Office, members of Congress, and as a volunteer with several organizations including the Junior League. Her public service involves working at all levels of government, including (former) U.S. Senator Bill Nelson, the U.S. and Florida House of Representatives, the State of Florida, and both Palm Beach & Sarasota (FL) counties.

Commissioner McKinlay's priorities include infrastructure and economic development in the Glades/rural region of her district, affordable and farmworker housing, the nation's opioid/heroin overdose epidemic, combatting human trafficking, and, of course, addressing the current COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Commissioner McKinlay's district is the largest agricultural production area east of the Mississippi River and the 5th largest in the nation, so promoting and protecting America's farmers, farmworkers and rural communities remains a top priority.

Strategic Partnership Opportunities with USDA Agencies



Dr. Elise Golan, Ph.D.
 Director for Sustainable Development
 USDA Office of the Chief Economist

Elise Golan is the Director for Sustainable Development at the U. S. Department of Agriculture. In this role, she provides leadership in planning, coordinating, and analyzing the Department's policies and programs related to sustainable agricultural, both domestically and internationally.



Hope Bigda-Peyton
 International Trade Specialist
 USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)

Hope Bigda-Peyton is the lead organizer/curator for the U.S. National Food Systems Dialogues. In this role, she provides leadership in planning and coordinating a series multi-stakeholder U.S. National Dialogue events leading up to the UN Food Systems Summit. She is an International Trade Specialist focusing on sustainability at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service.



Building Resilience in Agricultural and Food Systems through Strategic and Innovative Partnerships



Christina Conell
Deputy Director – Marketing Services Division
Transportation and Marketing Program
USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Christina Conell is a veggie-loving carnivore that began her career at the US Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service in 2010. She currently serves as the Deputy Director of the Marketing Services Division in the Transportation and Marketing Program. Christina has worn many hats, from helping run the first Farm to School Grant Program selection process in 2013 to leading the Office of Community Food Systems’ training and technical assistance efforts related to procurement and policy development. Most recently, she served as the Chief of the Child Nutrition Operations Branch which works with state agencies and AMS to purchase \$1.5 billion of food for the National School Lunch Program. She has detailed to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and served as an Excellence in Government Fellow with the Partnership for Public Service. Christina earned a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish Literature and Latin American Studies and a Master of Public Policy, both from the University of Virginia. She strives to make the smart food choice the irresistible choice, where we are guaranteed that the food is not only nutritious, but is a result of a system that promotes sustainability and economic prosperity for all parties along the supply chain and ensures access regardless of socioeconomic status or locality.



Kellie M. Kubena
Deputy Chief Innovation Officer
Innovation Center
USDA Rural Development

Kellie Kubena has served as the Deputy in the Rural Development Innovation Center since early 2019. In her role as Deputy, Kellie provides executive leadership to the Strategic Engagement Division that leads RD’s efforts to strategically engage partners to maximize the impacts of RD’s programs. Prior to that, Kellie served as the Director of the Engineering and Environmental Staff (EES) in USDA’s Rural Utilities Service Water and Environmental Programs. During her tenure as Director of EES, Kellie also served as the Acting Assistant Administrator for Water and Environmental Programs in 2017 and the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Telecommunications Program in 2018. Prior to joining USDA in 2015, Kellie served in various positions over 17 years at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, including as the chief of the Sustainable Communities Branch in the Office of Wastewater Management helping small and rural communities gain access to and sustain their wastewater treatment. Kellie has a bachelor’s degree in Wildlife and Fisheries with a minor in Oceanography from Texas A&M University and a Master’s degree in Fisheries from the University of Washington.



Cathy Cohn
Technology Transfer Liaison
Office of Technology Transfer
USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

Cathy Cohn serves as the USDA-ARS Technology Transfer Liaison in the Office of Technology Transfer. Cathy’s duties involve outreach activities and overseeing the Agricultural Research Partnerships (ARP) Network, a public private partnership model which expands the impact and reach of ARS technology transfer efforts.

Prior to federal service, Cathy acquired 18 years of sales and marketing experience, working for both small and large companies, developing revenue growth and profit by understanding product positioning, pricing, competition and new product development in the biotechnology industry. She has a MBA in business and a MS in biochemistry.

Building Resilience in Agricultural and Food Systems through Strategic and Innovative Partnerships



Toni M Flax

Acting Director, Volunteer Programs
 Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC)
 Rangeland Management Specialist
 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Toni M Flax is a Rangeland Management Specialist with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Northwest Kansas with a collateral duty of State Volunteer Coordinator. She is currently on detail as the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) NHQ Earth team Volunteer Program Coordinator. Toni started her career as Earth Team Volunteer in 1996, before becoming a Student Intern in 2000. She has served the USDA-NRCS and the Federal

Government for 20 years.

Toni received a B.S. in Biology from Fort Hays State University in Hays KS, along with an Associate of Science degree in Agronomy from Pratt Community College in Pratt, KS.

Event Producers



Alex Córdoba

Community Development Specialist
 Program Lead, Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships
 USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE)

Alex brings over ten years of experience in the agricultural development sector in both the United States and abroad. As Program Lead for the USDA Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Alex leads secretarial and departmental initiatives with an emphasis on community economic development, public private partnerships, and food security. He also serves on the Management Team of the Local and Regional Food Systems Working Group, as well as the USDA advisory committee of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP).

Alex joined USDA in 2016 as a Presidential Management Fellow with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and has also spent time as a Strategic Engagement Specialist and Promise Zone Desk Officer with USDA Rural Development. He holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology, and Religious Studies, with a minor in American Ethnic Studies, from Willamette University in Salem, OR, and a Master's in Public Administration from the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs with a concentration in public and non profit management.

Jessica Carlton

Legislative Affairs Specialist
 USDA Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC)



Jessica Carlton is a Legislative Affairs Specialist on the Intergovernmental and Stakeholder Engagement team with USDA's Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center. In this role, she engages with USDA leadership and other government agencies on behalf of FPAC and provides outreach to USDA stakeholders. She holds a bachelor's degree in History from Wake Forest University and a Master's Degree in Public History from American University.