



**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**  
**Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Advisory Committee (FRRCC)**  
**Member Biographies**  
**November 2021**

**Michael J. Aerts**

*National Chair; Technical Committee*  
Minor Crop Farmer Alliance  
*Director; Science and Regulatory Affairs*  
Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association  
Maitland, Florida

In his current position as Director of Science and Regulatory Affairs for Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, Mr. Aerts is responsible for providing direct support to FFVA's producer members on a broad variety of environmental and regulatory fronts. He advocates for specialty crop grower's interests on crop protection and related supply chain issues affecting production and the domestic/international movement of Florida's fruits, vegetables and other agricultural products. He serves as the focal point for grower interests at the local, regional and state level in Florida, as well as nationally and internationally, for pesticide, crop protection, environmental and regulatory matters.

Additionally, Mr. Aerts chairs the Technical Committee of the Minor Crop Farmer Alliance, an organization that addresses legislative and administrative policies to ensure the continued availability of crop protection chemicals for specialty crops. He also serves as President of Third Party Registrations, Inc., a non-profit subsidiary of FFVA, incorporated to provide chemical products and registration support for pest management tools that are critical to Florida specialty crop producers. Mr. Aerts is also active on issue-specific national coalitions such as the Crop Protection Coalition, the Pesticide Policy Coalition and the IR-4 Commodity Liaison Committee. His educational background includes a Master of Science degree in Plant Pathology and a Bachelor of Science degree in Horticulture/Pest Management, both from Michigan State University.

**Barry Berg**

*Watershed Coordinator*  
East Dakota Water Development District  
Brookings, South Dakota

Barry Berg is the Watershed Coordinator of the Big Sioux River Watershed Project for the East Dakota Water Development District in South Dakota. He started work on the initial assessments in the Big Sioux River Basin and moved into coordination of the project where he has developed new innovative management strategies that have been adopted across South Dakota and Minnesota. He has been working on water quality for over 20 years while authoring several grants and proposals to bring a partnership of federal, state and local agencies together with farmers and ranchers to improve water quality.

**Emily M. Broad Leib**

*Clinical Professor of Law  
Faculty Director, Food Law and Policy Clinic  
Harvard Law School  
Cambridge, Massachusetts*

Emily M. Broad Leib is a Clinical Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, Faculty Director of the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic, and Deputy Director of the Harvard Law School Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation. Broad Leib's program, the Food Law and Policy Clinic, is the first law school clinic in the nation devoted to providing legal and policy guidance on food law and policy issues. Broad Leib focuses her scholarship, teaching, and practice on identifying solutions to the biggest health, economic, and environmental issues facing our food system. She has particular expertise in food safety, food waste, and food regulation. She has published scholarly articles in the *California Law Review*, *Wisconsin Law Review*, the *Harvard Law & Policy Review*, the *Food & Drug Law Journal*, and the *Journal of Food Law & Policy*, among others. Broad Leib is recognized as a national leader in Food Law and Policy and her work has been covered in such media outlets as *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *CBS This Morning*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Boston Globe*, *The Guardian*, *TIME*, *Politico*, and the *Washington Post*. Broad Leib received her B.A. from Columbia University and her J.D. from Harvard Law School, cum laude.

**Don Brown**

*CEO  
Anchor Three Farm, Inc.  
Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture 2015-2019  
Yuma, Colorado*

Don Brown was appointed Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture by Governor John Hickenlooper in January 2015 and served in the position until January of 2019.

Brown, a third-generation farmer in Yuma County Colorado, has run several successful businesses while spending most of his career managing and growing his family's extensive farming operations. He has also been active in water conservation, energy development, and designing technological innovations within the industry which resulted in him obtaining two U.S. patents.

The Brown family farm was homesteaded in 1911 and has been designated as a Colorado Centennial Farm. Don continues that pioneering spirit today through his study of the Ogallala Aquifer and on behalf of NASS he presented to the National Academy of Science's Committee on complex farm surveys in 2017.

Don and his wife, Peggy, have three children who continue to call Colorado home.

**Jamie Burr**

*Director of Sustainability Implementation*

Tyson Foods, Inc.  
Springdale, AR

Jamie Burr was raised in agriculture and has a passion for natural resource conservation and farmer resiliency. Mr. Burr, a graduate of Missouri State University with a BS and MS in soil science, joined Tyson Foods in 1999. Throughout his career with Tyson, Mr. Burr has served in various environmental compliance positions. In his current role, Mr. Burr directs the implementation of the company's environmental sustainability goals and engagement with the supply chain relative to sustainability. He has served on several state policy workgroups and industry committees, including chairing committees of the National Pork Board and U.S. Poultry and Egg Association.

**Phillip H. Chavez**

*Director*

Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy  
District, Catlin Canal Company, and Lower  
Arkansas Valley Super Ditch

*Partner*

Diamond A Farms and Mohawk Valley Farms  
Rocky Ford, Colorado

Phillip Chavez is a graduate of Cornell University and Thunderbird School of Global Management. He is the managing partner of Diamond 'A' Farms in Colorado, a diversified grower of alfalfa and hemp for cbd extraction and purification. He is also a partner in Mohawk Valley Farms, a specialized grower of alfalfa for Middle Eastern and Asian markets. In addition to farming, Phillip has traveled extensively through pacific-rim countries marketing North & South American fresh fruits and vegetables.

**John R. H. Collison**

*Owner*

BlackOak Farms  
Edmond, Oklahoma

John Collison, co-owner of BlackOak Farms, <http://www.huntblackoakfarms.com/> grew up in California raising livestock, hunting and fishing. As a young boy, John was heavily involved in agriculture, going back five generations in California Ag. John moved to Oklahoma in the early 1990's to attend Oklahoma State University and fell in love with the agriculture life that Oklahoma and Texas offered and never left.

John is also the owner of The BlackOak Group and has worked in Oklahoma, Texas and Washington DC politics most of his adult life after serving in the United States Air Force. As owner of <http://www.blackoakgrp.com/>, John has hosted and entertained guests from around the world for years through all forms of political events.

BlackOak Farms is owned and operated by John and Monica (Miller) Collison of Edmond, Oklahoma. BlackOak Farms is a full-service bird hunting operation, along with the traditional agriculture practices of farming and ranching. BlackOak Farms provides an upscale hunting experience of the old-world tradition.

**William (Bill) Couser**

*President/Owner*  
Couser Cattle Company  
Nevada, Iowa

My name is Bill Couser from Nevada Iowa. I have lived here and raised my two sons Casey and Tim. I'm a graduate of Dmcc and have worked for Deere and Company and Massy Fergusson. Started farming in 1977 with 24 cows and 200 acres of farm ground. Our youngest son Tim has come back and is operating the farming operation of 7000 acres. We raise corn, seed corn, soybeans, oats, sorghum, hay and seed beans. I continue to run the 5200 hd. feedyard on a daily basis. Our oldest son Casey Is a film editor and director working with us on our operations web site and crop scouting with high tech equipment.

My wife Nancy of 40 years and I have grown the operation together. She has served in many capacities local and state but the Environmental Protection Commission with the IDNR was her last appointment. Over the years we have received many awards with the National Cattlemen's Environmental Stewardship Award along with the National Beef Quality Assurance Award is most humbling. This past year Nancy and I were inducted into the Iowa Cattlemen's Hall of Fame. We have spent our entire career making sure that we have a seat at the table and not on the menu working with State and Federal agencies. We have opened our farm and feedlot to thousands of people over the years and will continue to help educate and show people the real farm behind all of this.

**Michael Crowder**

*President – Elect*  
National Association of Conservation Districts  
*General Manager/Shareholder*  
Barker Ranch  
*Local Supervisor*  
Benton Conservation District  
West Richland, Washington

Michael Crowder, President-Elect for the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), is a native of southern Indiana and a Partner of his 3<sup>rd</sup> generation family farm. Since 2001, Michael has been the General Manager of the Barker Ranch, a 2,000+ acre ranch located along several miles of the Yakima River in West Richland, WA, and has been a partner since 2013. He received an Associate's degree in natural resources and environmental science from Vincennes University, and earned a Bachelor's degree in natural resources and environmental science, as well as a Master's degree in wildlife science, from Purdue University. Crowder served eight years as an adjunct professor at Washington State University Tri-Cities teaching classes in wetland restoration, wildlife science, and

ecology. He is active in agriculture, conservation, and community issues, and serves on many local, state, and national boards and advisory committees. Michael has received both the Benton County and Washington State “Wildlife Farmer of the Year” awards, and has been acknowledged by NACD as a “Soil Health Champion”.

**Matthew Freund**

*Owner*

Freund's Farm and CowPots LLC  
East Canaan, Connecticut

Matt Freund was born and raised on a family dairy farm, Freund’s Farm. Together, with his brother Ben, they have grown the farm business while investing in technology and conservation practices. Matt manages one of the longest continuously operating anaerobic methane digesters in the country, capturing biogas for on-farm energy use and harvesting the raw material used in his invention, CowPots. Matt’s decades long commitment to sustainability has been recognized by local and national organizations.

**Sharon Furches**

*Co-owner*

Furches Farms Partnership  
*Second Vice President*  
Kentucky Farm Bureau  
Louisville, Kentucky

Sharon owns & operates Furches Farms Partnership with her husband, Tripp, growing 5000 acres of wheat, corn, canola and soybeans near Murray, KY. Their operation also includes a grain handling facility on the farm and they stockpile lime, rock, and erosion mat for retail sale. Sharon serves as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of Kentucky Farm Bureau for both the Federation and Insurance companies. She has been active in many agricultural and civic boards over the years.

**Jeffrey Gore, Ph.D.**

*Research Entomologist*

Delta Research and Extension Center  
Mississippi State University  
Stoneville, Mississippi

Dr. Jeffrey “Jeff” Gore currently serves as a Research and Extension Professor at the Mississippi State University, Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville, MS. Jeff grew up in a small town in east central Alabama. He received his B.S. from Auburn University in Entomology/Integrated Pest Management. After receiving his B.S., Jeff attended Louisiana State University where he earned M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Entomology. Since receiving his Ph.D. in 2002, Jeff has worked as a Research Entomologist for the USDA-ARS in Stoneville and in his current role with Mississippi State University since 2007. Jeff’s research and extension responsibilities involve integrated pest management of insect pests in the crops grown in Mississippi. He has been actively involved in pollinator research and in

evaluating pest management tools to manage insect pests. Jeff currently lives in a small rural community where agriculture is the most important industry.

**David Graybill**

*Owner*

Red Sunset Farm

*Executive Committee, State Board of Directors*

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau

Mifflintown, Pennsylvania

Dave operates a dairy farm in Juniata County, milking 60 head of registered Holsteins and raising 70-plus head of replacement heifers. The cattle are rotationally grazed on 60 acres of paddocks. The farm is rented from landowners who reside in the Washington, D.C. area. It is about 400 acres. Corn, soybeans, hay, and small grains are grown and 10,000 bushels of on-farm grain storage adds value. Sunflowers and buckwheat have been added as a double crop after barley for bird seed and eye appeal. There is also a small beekeeping operation that currently includes about three dozen bee hives. The nutrient management program is improved through a 700,000-gallon manure storage system.

**Alex P. Johns**

*Director of Special Projects*

Seminole Tribe of Florida Inc.

Okeechobee, Florida

Alex Johns is a resident of Brighton Florida and member of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. He is employed by the Seminole Tribe and works in a capacity to help with various Tribal programs that oversee agriculture operations as well as environmental operations that pertain to conservation and preservation of Tribal Natural Resources. Alex is a past president of the Florida Cattlemen's Association and has worked the past 25 years managing the Seminole Tribe's cattle holdings.

**Jimmy W. Kinder**

*Owner/Operator*

Kinder Farms

*District 4 Director, State Board*

Oklahoma Farm Bureau

Walters, Oklahoma

Mr. Kinder is a fourth-generation farmer/rancher from southwest Oklahoma. The farm raises stocker cattle, wheat, canola, and grain sorghum. He is nationally active with the Soil Health Institute, Farm Foundation, and American Farm Bureau. He serves on the Oklahoma Dept. of Environmental Quality board currently as chairman. He is on the state board of Oklahoma Farm Bureau and its affiliated companies. He has a B.S. in Agronomy.

**Jeanette L. Lombardo**

*Principal*

California Food and Agribusiness Advocates  
Ventura, California

Jeanette is the Executive Director for the Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC), which is a national non-profit headquartered in Davis, California. The mission of the FVC is to “Mobilize Veteran to Feed America”. Currently FVC has chapters in fifteen states. Prior to joining FVC Jeanette was the owner of California Food and Agribusiness Advocates, which was established in Ventura, California and specialized in water, land use, labor, crop protection resources, and international trade. Jeanette is also the Founder and Chief Strategic Officer for Global Water Innovations Inc. located in Cambria, California. Global Water is an industry partner with the National Alliance for Water Innovation and works on providing innovative agricultural water solutions.

In addition to her service on numerous agricultural boards, Jeanette has held several governmental appointments. In 2011 Jeanette received a four-year federal appointment to the United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Ag Services Division. This appointment was made to the Agricultural Technical advisory Committee for Trade for fruits and vegetables. In 2010, Jeanette held a state appointment to the California EPA State Water Resources Board #4-Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (LARWQCB). The LARWQCB is one of nine regional boards statewide, and has the jurisdiction to protect the ground and surface water quality for the 98 cities in the Los Angeles and Ventura County Regions.

Jeanette is past State President for California Women for Agriculture (2016-2017) and past National President for American Agri-Women (2017-2019).

**Lauren C. Lurkins (*Committee Vice Chair*)**

*Director of Environmental Policy*

Illinois Farm Bureau  
Bloomington, Illinois

Lauren Lurkins serves as the Director of Environmental Policy in the Governmental Affairs and Commodities Division and has held that position since May 2013. In that position, Lauren is responsible for advocating on behalf of the organization in the promulgation, implementation and enforcement of environmental regulation impacting Illinois agriculture. Lauren maintains liaison with various state and federal agencies, and develops and coordinates the organization’s environmental programs, communications and information. Beginning in 2006, Lauren practiced environmental law with the law firm of Hodge Dwyer & Driver in Springfield, IL. Her previous experience includes both enforcement defense and legislative/regulatory work in all areas of environmental law on behalf of a variety of clients, including agricultural businesses and individual farmers. Lauren holds a bachelor’s degree in environmental science from Saint Louis University and earned her law degree from Southern Illinois University School of Law, with a focus on environmental law. Lauren and her husband, Matt, have one daughter, Caroline and one son, Julian. They live in Bloomington, IL.

**Gary Mahany**

*Owner*

Gary Mahany Farms

Arkport, New York

The first board I was on was the Steuben County Farm Bureau. I resigned from that in 1987 when I was elected to the Arkport Central School board of education. I was a board member for 20 years-15 of which I served as the board president. I signed all of my children's diploma's and handed them to them. I then became a representative of the United States Potato Board for 6 years, representing 3 states, New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island. When my term ended I became a director of the Empire State Potato Growers for a few years-serving as president for 2 years. Along with ESPG, I was elected to the Farm Credit of Western New York board of directors. This went on for a few years and Farm Credit of Western NY merged with First Pioneer Farm Credit, which then became Farm Credit East. I remained a Farm Credit East director until board downsizing ended my term. I volunteered to leave before other directors as I was a relatively new elect and I thought the organization would be best served with more seasoned veteran directors. In recent years I have served on the Steuben County Cornell Cooperative Extension Ag committee, which I am still doing. This EPA committee is my latest adventure.

**Nicholas McCarthy**

*Senior Vice President of Agronomy*

Central Valley Ag Cooperative

York, Nebraska

Nic McCarthy, serves as the Senior Vice President of Agronomy for Central Valley Ag Cooperative. Through his 20-year experience with Central Valley Ag (CVA), he has held various roles that deliver value to its member-owners. Supporting services in Agronomy, Feed, Fuel, and Grain to provide value to its customers is the rural footprint Central Valley Ag serves and continues to be the forefront of the business. Ensuring the long-term success of its employees and customers is not only the vision of the CVA but a life mission for Nic. With over 13,000 member-owners, Nic is driven to help solve challenges that our farm and rural communities face through education, volunteer work, board seats, and rural community support.

**Jesse McCurry**

*Executive Director*

Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission

Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Association

Colwich, Kansas

Jesse works with producers to advance sorghum. He was born and raised on a diversified Angus ranch and farm in NW Sedgwick County KS. With degrees from Kansas State University, Jesse has spent his career working to improve agriculture and rural Kansas. He is married and has four children.



**William Thomas (Tom) McDonald (Committee Chair)**

*Senior Vice President - Environmental Affairs and Sustainability*

Five Rivers Cattle Feeding, LLC

Dalhart, Texas

Tom McDonald is Senior Vice President of Environmental Affairs and Sustainability for Five Rivers Cattle Feeding, LLC. He has 30 years of technical knowledge and practical experience with sustainable environmental systems for beef cattle operations. He is responsible for environmental systems design and compliance for eleven beef cattle feedyards spanning six states and four EPA regions. He received his B.S. degree in Animal Science from West Texas A&M University and his M.S. degree in Beef Cattle Production and Management from the University of Tennessee. McDonald currently serves as chairman of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association's Property Rights and Environmental Committee, chair of NCBA's environmental working group and past chairman of Texas Cattle Feeders Association. In addition, McDonald currently serves on the board of the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef. McDonald, a third generation rancher, oversees his family's ranching enterprise in eastern New Mexico. The time he spends with his family caring for the cattle and natural resources, and enjoying the land, has shown him the importance of conserving our natural resources for future generations. In addition, he understands the challenges facing small, family farming and ranching enterprises.

**Jay Ivan Olsen**

*Environmental Program Manager*

Utah Department of Agriculture and Food

Salt Lake City, Utah

Jay is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation rancher and farmer with a Bachelor Degree in Animal Science. He lives in Ephraim, Utah with his wife, Tawny. They are the proud parents of ten children and thirteen grandchildren; his greatest accomplishment. In 2012, Jay accepted a job offer from the Commissioner of the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, where he is currently employed. He is on multiple committees including: the State AFO/CAFO Committee, Sanpitch Watershed Stewardship Group, Utah Lake Water Quality Study Steering Committee, Water Quality Task Force, Water Quality Standards Workgroup and local irrigation boards. He formerly served as, County Farm Bureau President/ board member, Utah Water Quality Board, and Ephraim Irrigation board member.

**Christopher L. Pettit**

*Director*

Office of Agricultural Water Policy

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Tallahassee, Florida

Christopher Pettit is the Director of the Office of Agricultural Water Policy for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The Office is responsible for the development and oversight of the proper implementation of best management practices for agricultural properties related to water quality and conservation. The Office additionally establishes and implements programs for the provision

of financial and technical assistance to producers in their implementation of the best management practices and other water resources projects. Christopher previously served as an attorney for two regional Water Management Districts in Florida and as a Policy and Legislation Manager handling water and environmental issues for Palm Beach County, Florida. He additionally has acted as a consultant on several international projects related to the governance of environmental resources, resiliency in water resource and utility management, ecosystem restoration, and the development of public goods frameworks for watershed management. He has a law degree from the University of Florida and an LLM from the University of Cape Town, in addition to doctoral studies at several institutions in a variety of disciplines.

**William R. Pracht**

*President/CEO*

Pracht Farms  
East Kansas Agri-Energy  
Garnett, Kansas

William R Pracht - Age 63, William “Bill” is a lifetime resident of Anderson County, Kansas, and has been farming and ranching since 1975. He has been an active member of his community for many years serving his church council, county fair board, 4-H club leader and extension council member. Bill has been a long time member of both Kansas Corn Growers and Kansas Livestock Association serving as county director and chair of many KLA committees. He is currently a member of the Kansas Board of Agriculture and is Vice President of Renew Kansas.

Bill was one of the founding board members of East Kansas Agri-Energy beginning in 2002 also serving as board chair until 2017. It was then that he was hired as President/CEO a position he still holds. Bill and his wife Ruth are parents of three grown children and have three grandchildren. They were awarded Kansas Master Farmer and Homemaker in 2014.

**Graciela I. Ramírez-Toro, Ph.D.**

*Institutional Director*

Center for Environmental Education,  
Conservation and Research  
Inter American University of Puerto Rico  
San Germán, Puerto Rico

Professor Graciela I. Ramirez-Toro is the Institutional Director of the CECIA-IAU. In this role she promotes the integration of environmental topics to academic programs and community outreach couple with apply research leading to collaborations among scientists, government and community in local, national and international settings. Doctor Ramirez-Toro has consulted with State, Commonwealth and Federal agencies including the EPA, and has served on the NDWAC, the NEJAC and NACEPT and in various US EPA working groups for the revision of rules and regulations. She has numerous publications and was recognized twice with the Environmental Water Quality Award by U.S. EPA, Region 2 (1997, 2006) and with the AWWA 2011 Regional AWARD for outstanding services towards community education and the PRW&EA 2011 AWARD for strategies to promote safe drinking water

for rural communities. In 2017, was elected Emblematic Scientist-AIDIS PR and represent AIDIS PR in the International Division on Sanitation and Rural Drinking Water (DISAR). During the last 11 years she has devoted her time to develop strategies to enhance capacity in the populations that administer and operate small potable water supplies in rural areas of the USA. Doctor Ramirez-Toro earned a Master's degree from Hood College in Frederick, MD and a PhD from Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA.

**Charles R. Santerre, Ph.D.**

*Department Chair and Professor*  
Department of Food, Nutrition and  
Packaging Sciences  
Clemson University  
Clemson, South Carolina

Charles R. Santerre, Ph.D. is Department Chair and Professor of Food, Nutrition, and Packaging Sciences at Clemson University. From 1998-2021, he was Professor of Food Toxicology in the Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. Starting in 2020, he has served as an appointed member to the Environmental Protection Agency's Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Committee (EPA-FRRCC). In 2018-19, he served as a Senior Policy Advisor for agriculture and health in the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) where he played a key role during the development of two Presidential Executive Orders e.g., "Modernizing the Regulatory Framework for U.S. Agricultural Biotechnology Products," and "Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth." In 2013 and again in 2017-18, he served as the Interim Head for the School of Health Sciences at Purdue University. In 2014-15, he was selected as a National Academy of Sciences, Jefferson Science Fellow and was hosted by the U.S. Department of State in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) where he served as an Intelligence Analyst. In 2014-17, he was appointed to the Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition's (FDA-CFSAN) Food Advisory Committee. In 2010-11, he served as an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science & Technology Policy Fellow and was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety Inspection Service, Office of Public Health Science, Risk Assessment Division (USDA-FSIS-OPHS-RAD) where he developed and helped to implement a vision for identifying, measuring, and responding to emerging chemical contaminants in meat and poultry products. He has served as a food safety expert for the International Life Sciences Institute of North America (ILSI-NA), and the International Food Information Council (IFIC). Prior to joining Purdue University (1995-98), he was the Chemistry Operations Manager for Silliker Laboratories, Inc. (Columbus, OH) and an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Environmental Sciences Program at The Ohio State University. Prior to this (1989-95), he was an Assistant Professor in the Environmental Health Science Program and the Interdepartmental Toxicology Program at the University of Georgia (with a Courtesy Appointment in the Institute of Ecology).

**Beth C. Sauerhaft, Ph.D.**  
*Vice President of Programs*  
American Farmland Trust  
Chappaqua, New York

Beth Sauerhaft is currently the Vice President of Programs at the American Farmland Trust where she has managed a team of 10 including 8 national initiative directors, since January 2019. Prior to joining AFT, Beth worked as an independent Sustainability Strategist advising organizations on strategies to mitigate environmental and social risk in fashion, food and beverage, farmland investment, ocean sustainability, education and agriculture. Beth worked as the Senior Director of Corporate Sustainability at PepsiCo where she introduced sustainability to the innovation, budget and strategic planning processes in Corporate R&D and developed pilots/programs targeting enhanced social or environmental sustainability of dairy and arable crop supply chains until 2015.

Before joining PepsiCo in 2007, she worked for the US EPA as the Deputy to the Agricultural Counselor. In that position, she provided policy advice to the Agricultural Counselor, the Administrator and other EPA managers on a variety of agricultural issues cutting across functional responsibilities of the Agency and brought diverse stakeholder voices to the agricultural rulemaking process.

Prior to working at EPA, Beth worked at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service where she held national leadership responsibility for Atmospheric Resource Quality Management issues and before that was a District Conservationist in New York where she worked with farmers to implement Farm Bill programs and put conservation practices on the ground.

Beth was on the Board of Directors of the Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation from 2011-2015 and chaired her town's Sustainability Advisory Board from 2010-2013.

Beth earned her Ph.D. in arid land agroforestry from Texas A&M University; has a Masters of Environmental Management in natural resource ecology from Duke University in Natural Resource Ecology; and, a BA degree in American Studies from Grinnell College.

**Stacy Wayne Smith**  
*Owner*  
S & A Smith Farms  
New Home, Texas

Stacy Smith is currently the owner and manager of S & A Smith Farms, a family farming operation located in New Home, Texas. After graduating from Texas Tech University in 1997 with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Marketing, he returned home to pursue his lifelong passion for the farming industry. As time passed, Stacy developed an interest in serving organizations that worked to promote the value and sustainability of American agriculture. Stacy currently serves on the National Cotton Council's Environmental Policy Task Force committee, the Lynn County Water Advisory Committee, and Cotton Incorporated's Board of Directors. He also serves as the President of the Board

at New Home Coop Gin and is the current President of Plains Cotton Growers in Lubbock, Texas. In 2014, Stacy was named the Lynn County Conservation Farmer of the Year.

**Davie Shane Stephens**

*Owner*

DJ Stephens Farm  
American Soybean Association  
Wingo, Kentucky

Davie Stephens, a soybean farmer from Clinton, Ky., is chairman of the American Soybean Association (ASA). He previously served as president, vice president, secretary and treasurer of ASA, and has been an ASA national director since 2012. He represented his fellow farmers on the Kentucky Soybean Association (KSA) board from 2006-14, serving as treasurer, secretary, vice president and president. Stephens farms more than 5,500 acres in Kentucky and Tennessee. In addition to soybeans, he grows corn and raises chickens in four poultry barns. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky, and a master's degree from Murray State University. He is married to Judy Byrd Stephens, who does farm bookkeeping, grain marketing, and other responsibilities since transitioning to the farm after a career with AT&T. Davie is a member of Mayfield First United Methodist Church and serves on their Board of Trustees. He is also a Board Member of Mahali pa Maisha infant rescue center in Kenya.

**Jeff M. Witte**

*Secretary of Agriculture*

State of New Mexico  
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Jeff Witte is the director/secretary of New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) and the Cabinet secretary of agriculture for the state of New Mexico and has served in this capacity since May 2011. He is the immediate past president of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, a past president of the Western United States Agriculture Trade Association and on the board and past president of the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture. He is also vice chair of the EPA Local Government Advisory Committee.

Mr. Witte served as the assistant director of NMDA from 1994 to 2003 then the director for the Office of Agricultural Biosecurity for NMDA and New Mexico State University (NMSU) until 2011. He codirected the Southwest Border Food Safety and Defense Center at NMSU, working on agriculture issues related to homeland security.

Mr. Witte comes from a ranching family in northern New Mexico. He is a graduate of New Mexico State University with a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Business Management and a master's degree in Agricultural Economics and Economics

**Amy Wolfe**

*President and CEO Emeritus*

AgSafe

Modesto, California

Amy Wolfe is the President and CEO Emerita of AgSafe whose mission is to provide practical health and safety education to the agricultural community. Her career includes tenure as a legislative aide in the California State Assembly, serving as an account executive for E&J Gallo Winery and as Vice President of the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation.

Ms. Wolfe is dedicated to her community serving on the Boards of Directors of the Modesto Rotary Club Foundation, The Salas Foundation and Protected Harvest, being an involved member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, various California county Farm Bureau and a Girl Scout for nearly 37 years.

Ms. Wolfe received her Master of Public Policy and Administration from CSU, Sacramento, her Bachelor of Science from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and is accredited as a Certified Fundraising Executive (CFRE).

**James E. Zook**

*Executive Director*

Michigan Corn Growers Association and

Corn Marketing Program of Michigan

Lansing, Michigan

Jim was born and raised on his family's farm in central Illinois. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Illinois State University and a Master of Agribusiness degree from Kansas State University. He worked in the farm supply business in Wisconsin before moving to Michigan in 1999 to accept a position as crops agent for Michigan State University Extension. Jim helped facilitate the formation of the Michigan Corn Processors that eventually led to the state's first large scale ethanol facility in Caro, MI. Jim then co-founded and managed the second ethanol facility in Woodbury, MI. Jim has served as executive director of the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan and Michigan Corn Growers Association since 2012.