



## 2024 AgriSummit Friday Presenter Bios

### **Friday Welcome/Opening Remarks**

#### ***Andrea Earley Coen***

For over 30 years, Andrea’s professional background has been in the nonprofit sector, working with schools, outdoor and agriculture education centers, farms and wilderness programs in Minnesota, Wisconsin, California, and Colorado. Since joining Guidestone’s team in 2008, she has worn many hats, and is thrilled to have stepped into the role of Executive Director. She is passionate about creating opportunities for engagement in the agricultural realm for people of all ages, and believes deeply in collaboration as a way to support the next generation of producers, keep agricultural land viable, build a thriving local food system and strengthen community. She is honored to be a part of forwarding Guidestone’s mission to grow a vibrant agricultural future.



#### ***Kate Greenberg***

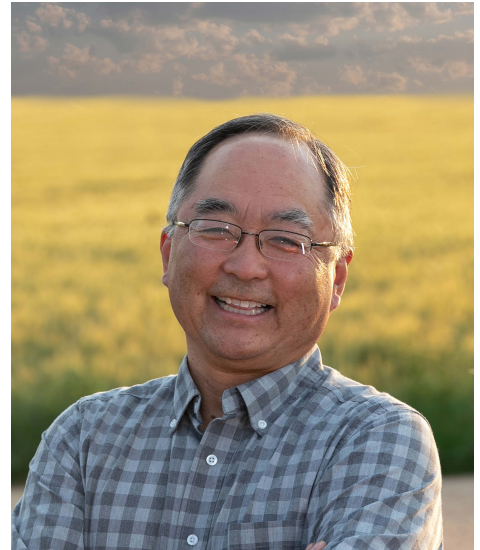
Kate Greenberg was appointed to serve as Colorado’s Commissioner of Agriculture by Governor Jared Polis in December 2018. Commissioner Greenberg has worked in agriculture for more than 12 twelve years, from boots-on-the-ground experience to advocating for family farmers through two federal Farm Bills. Prior to her appointment, Greenberg was the Western Program Director for the National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC), where she established and grew the organization’s presence and membership across the West. In her role as Western Director, she organized farmers and ranchers to advocate for state and federal policies that best serve them. Leading up to her tenure at NYFC, Greenberg farmed on various operations across the West, managed Western policy field programs through her alma mater, Whitman College, and worked in natural resource education and restoration from eastern Washington to Mexico’s Colorado River Delta. Greenberg was also involved in the development of the Colorado Water Plan and Colorado River Basin water policy, advocating for policies that keep water in agriculture. Greenberg is the recipient of the Emerging Conservation Leader Award from Western Resource Advocates and an awardee of the 2019 Who’s Who In Agriculture recognition from Colorado Farm Bureau and the Denver Business Journal. As Commissioner, Greenberg serves on numerous boards and commissions, including the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Colorado State Fair Board. While she currently spends much of her time on Colorado’s Front Range and traveling the state, she still calls Durango, Colorado home.



## **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

### ***Robert Sakata***

Robert Sakata serves as the Colorado Department of Agriculture Ag Water Policy Advisor, a new position approved by the 2023 legislative session, and began his new position in January 2024. Robert has a wide range of water experiences beyond his family's irrigated farming operation, where he currently serves on the mutual ditch company board of directors for the Brighton, Fulton and New Brantner Irrigation Ditch Companies. He previously was appointed to serve on the Agriculture Groundwater Advisory Board that was formed as a result of SB90-126. Because of his role on the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission, where he was appointed by 4 different governors, he has already spent more than 15 years in State service. Additionally, he served on the Colorado Foundation for Water Education Board of Directors (now known as Water Education Colorado), where he helped put together the first Water Quality Citizen's Guide. Robert was born and raised in Colorado and has been involved in numerous farm organizations. In 2013, with the help of dedicated CSU Cooperative Extension staff, he helped form the Colorado Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (CFVGA) and served as the founding president until his appointment to the CWCB. Having grown up on the family farm, Robert attributes his hard work ethic and desire to serve the community from the inspirational example that his parents set. Robert is thrilled to be able to apply his farming experience in this new role with the Department of Agriculture, especially since food and water connect us all.



## **Workshop Session Speakers - Morning**

### ***Holly Conn***

Holly Conn is the Executive Director of Mountain Roots Food Project, based in Gunnison, CO. Holly spent twelve years in the restaurant industry, including seven as a private yacht chef, and founded Mountain Roots after moving to Colorado in 2010 to expand resilient food systems in rural mountain communities. Holly believes that localizing our food system is one of the most accessible and actionable things individuals and communities can do to solve so many of our global problems. As Executive Director, she works with local and regional partners to advance social, economic, and environmental health by activating community-based solutions in rural Colorado communities in the areas of farm to school, regenerative agriculture, and community food security.



### ***Nick Chambers***

Nicholas Chambers comes out of small farming/homesteading and renewable energy work in Crestone, CO, and has now been in Colorado's local food distribution for over 10 years. He was the founding GM & "Chief Fungi" of Valley Roots Food Hub in Mosca, CO in 2015 and one of the co-founders of the Tap Root Cooperative which is the evolution of the Colorado Food Hub Network that aggregates products from around the State and serves customers from Durango to Denver/Springs/Pueblo. As an extension of the food hub, he has been working on the Dune Valley Distillery to further showcase the region's potatoes, quinoa, and fine local foods. When not serving customers, producers, or food hub staff you might find him playing Irish music, working on renewables, or wandering in the Sangre de Cristo mountains in search of the next epiphany.



### ***Al Stone***

Al Stone aka our Markets Manager & "Mycelium Architect" is a transplant from Georgia, whose world was sparked by a philosophy of food class during college. After graduation, she trekked west on the Amtrak train & WWOOF-ed in Eugene, OR for five months. She volunteered with Farm2School programs, and school gardens, and eventually made her way to the San Luis Valley through AmeriCorps. Before joining Valley Roots she spent a summer as the assistant director with Valley Educational Gardens Initiative. She was vegan/vegetarian for nearly a decade, and after an experience with butchering a deer, she is now an avid eater and believer in meat raised with integrity. Just as Mycelia is an underground web of connection, as Markets Manager at Valley Roots, she enjoys the relationships cultivated between our producer and customer network. In her spare time, you can find her deep in a good book, performing poetry or oral stories, thrifting, creating collages, turning two wheels on some pavement, or hiking with her pup Elio.



### ***Benu S. Amun-Ra***

Benu Amun-Ra (We/Our/Ours) is a generational farmer, seed-keeper, eco-feminist activist and one of the communal founders of the non-profit organization, S.A.C.R.Ed (Seeding Ancestral Community Relationships Education) Eco-Center, which focuses on the principles of decolonization, integration, re-indigenization, and transformation. We teach about the importance of the reciprocal relationships we once had with Mother Nature by reinvigorating indigenous ways of knowing. We live at the intersections of being a single mother, a BIPOC farmer, LGBTQ+ community member and have over 32 years' experience as a primary caregiver for those living with disabilities. We believe in advocacy and have worked with organizations that center on food security, mental health access and advocacy, as these have been very crucial issues and primary challenges for marginalized communities, which have been exacerbated by hundreds of years of oppression, inequity, and trauma. Our advocacy includes working with organizations that address these issues in the capacity of a Community Council member for Hunger Free Colorado, a Land Fellow with the National Young Farmers Coalition, an alum of the Family Voice Council for the Colorado Department of Human Services, and an alum of the Creative Leadership Institute with the Colorado Health Foundation. We are currently pursuing our Ph.D. in Transformative Studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies to further the narrative for ancestral healing through our indigeneity.



### ***Emma Lietz-Bilecky***

Emma Lietz Bilecky has been working on land access since receiving a Master of Environmental Management at Duke University. She has worked on, managed, and taught at farms in the Southeast, Northeast, Midwest, and Mountain West and is motivated by work connecting sustainable land use, equity, and climate resilience. Emma started as the Colorado Land Link Director with Guidestone in January 2024.





### ***Helen Skiba***

Helen Skiba is a Colorado native, former English major, and returned Peace Corps Volunteer. She is a dedicated grower and tender of soil, and brings a background in soil science and poetry to her field work, as well as a passion for intricate color and texture in her designs. Helen developed her design style over many years of wedding design, but she also enjoys making a super-efficient market bouquet. She holds a Master's of Agriculture from Colorado State University, where she completed her thesis in combination with her Peace Corps service in an indigenous community in the Ecuadorian Amazon. She's a spreadsheet queen and also a member of the fraternal order of Grammar Police. Helen serves as the Regional Director for the South and Central Region of the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers (ASCFG), helping others create strong, sustainable farm businesses.



### ***Tony LaGreca***

A longtime resident of Colorado, Tony earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in geography from the University of Colorado before moving to the Klamath basin in Oregon. At the Klamath Tribes, he directed research and monitoring programs, and worked with stakeholders to develop watershed scale restoration strategies. Later, he went to work for Trout Unlimited and implemented numerous stream restoration projects designed to benefit ESA listed species and native trout. Tony now lives in Buena Vista and focuses on water projects in southern Colorado. Outside the office, Tony and his family can be found running the Arkansas River, skiing, hiking or just enjoying being back in Colorado



### ***Ben Lenth***

Ben Lenth joined Colorado Open Lands following eight years as Executive Director at San Isabel Land Protection Trust in Westcliffe, CO. Ben has also worked as a field biologist, tour guide and ranch manager, and served in the US Peace Corps in Mexico. He holds an MS in Ecology from Colorado State University, and a BA from Wesleyan University. Ben is based in Salida, where he lives with his wife and three young daughters.



### ***Tandy Key***

Tandy and Melanie Key own and farm Colorado Mountain Lavender in Cotopaxi, Colorado and are members of the US Lavender Growing Association and The Lavender Association of Colorado. At seven thousand feet elevation, the farm represents one of the highest in the United States. Beginning in 2017 with three hundred starter lavender plants, the farm now has over four thousand plants of two types of lavender, English and Lavandins, representing thirteen different cultivars. The farm opened to the public in 2020. Visitors can walk the lavender fields and visit the onsite shop, featuring lavender skin, aromatherapy, home, and lavender culinary products made at the farm. Lavender essential oil and hydrosol, produced onsite using steam distillation and formulated into their products, provide known health benefits and assurance of buying lavender from a local, naturally grown source. U-pick weekends in mid-August are an annual highlight at the farm, and the lavender blackberry ice cream, available all summer, is a customer favorite. You can shop anytime at [www.coloradomountainlavender.com](http://www.coloradomountainlavender.com) and plan to visit the farm beginning Memorial Day weekend through the end of September. Follow them on Instagram ([#coloradomountainlavender](https://www.instagram.com/coloradomountainlavender)) to learn about events at the farm and see them again this summer at the Foodshed Alliance Farmer's Market.



### ***Ricardo Vasquez-Perales***

Assistant Professor of Environment and Sustainability at the Clark Family School of Environment and Sustainability and Director of the Sustainable and Resilient Communities Track in the Masters in Environmental Management, where he teaches and mentors students. His research and teaching include climate action, community resilience, regenerative agriculture, composting, renewable energies, Life Cycle Assessment, and Systems Thinking. He teaches Environmental Politics and Policy courses, The Science and Action of Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, and the Nexus between Food, Water, and Climate Systems. Some projects he has led and mentored include food systems, regenerative agriculture, renewable energies, sustainable technologies, composting and biochar, community water and sanitation, and Climate Action plans for cities and regions. He did undergrad studies in Physics Engineering, a Masters in Regional Development Planning, and a PhD in Renewable Energies. He has collaborated with organizations in North and Latin America, Europe, and West Africa and embraces living in the Rocky Mountains in the Gunnison Valley.





### **Jennifer Visitacion**

Jennifer Visitacion founded Moonstone Ventures with a purpose of cultivating more creative, mindful and resilient leaders at home, at work and in community. Through executive coaching and organizational and leadership development support, she is passionate about supporting leaders, organizations and businesses to design a more sustainable path forward and create positive change for our communities and our environment. With nature as a mentor, she works together with clients to hone in on their unique vision, explore creative solutions for navigating change, and focus on developing healthy practices for personal and organizational sustainability.



### **Amy Kousch**

Medicinal plant grower and researcher, Amy Kousch, grew up in the hills of western Massachusetts, surrounded by a family of dairy farmers, vegetable growers, and florists. Amy's nursery management the natural progression of over 10 years of farm management, nursery production, and teaching agroecological farming practices. Amy owns and operates Mineral Roots Nursery. Mineral Roots Nursery is committed to rebuilding the green-water cycle, restoring biodiversity, above and below soil, and supporting the health and wellness of our fellow human neighbors.. We are serious about health -yours, ours, the soil, and our ecosystem.



### **Kirsten Wulfsberg**

Kirsten Wulfsberg, LPC, is the Regional Behavioral Health Specialist with CSU-E, covering the Mountain Region and also represents Colorado AgrAbility Project. For 20 years, Kirsten completed and taught crisis psychiatric assessments (suicide, homicide, psychosis, substance use) in the hospital setting. Kirsten is passionate about helping people gain personal insight and tools to help recognize the ups and downs of life (as well as mental health issues) and work towards managing them before they become a crisis. She loves to integrate humor and play into her psychoeducational trainings and the therapeutic work she does through CAAMHPforhealth.org.



### **Workshop Sessions Speakers - Afternoon**

#### **Taylor Drew**

Taylor Drew is the Executive Director of Veterans to Farmers which is a Colorado based nonprofit that trains veterans in agriculture and sustainability. Taylor has been involved in the local food system in Colorado for the last 15+ years, first as a chef and restaurant owner and then as a farmer and rancher. Currently, Taylor has a small farm in the Yampa Valley where he and his family raise heritage livestock and grow vegetables and small grains. Taylor is also a Navy Veteran and works hard to help other veterans connect with their local communities through food.



#### **Rich Murphy**

Richard Murphy is a 3rd generation Air Force Veteran who comes from a family proud of their military heritage. Rich understands the unique benefits the farm can offer his fellow veterans through his own personal experiences. He is fond of saying, "You don't have to call it therapy if you don't want to, just get some vets out in the dirt and the therapy will happen all on its own." Rich and his family own a 35-acre homestead outside Old Town Fort Collins, CO.



#### **Annie Over**

Annie and her family farm and ranch in southeast Colorado. Annie also works as a rangeland and riparian ecologist. She has studied, played, and worked in the cold desert ecosystems of the western United States and the Great Plains since 1992. Her ecosystem is exemplified by extremes with many miles between gas stations.



### ***Penn Parmenter***

In 1991, Penn Parmenter and her husband Cord moved onto raw land in the Colorado mountains and began building their 43 acre homestead at 8,120' above sea level. Since the beginning, Penn has been identifying wild native plants and in 2013, founded Miss Penn's Mountain Seeds, a high-altitude seed company that specializes in wild native seeds and her favorite crop, tomatoes. She also adapts and maintains other vegetables, herbs and garden flowers for her mail-order seed business. Penn and Cord also own and operate Smart Greenhouses LLC, a sustainable greenhouse design and build company. Together they have three famished sons who help them in all aspects of their work, Maximilian, Beaugard and Wulfgar.



### ***Laura Parker***

Laura Parker is a self proclaimed seed freak who owns and operates High Desert Seed + Gardens in Paonia, CO. Her seed company is committed to the stewardship of seeds that thrive in the short season and arid regions of the west. Raised on a ranch in western Colorado that practiced holistic management, she has a deep passion for regenerative agriculture and systems thinking. After college she worked in India with Vandana Shiva's seed banks and later with seed growers across the US as executive director of the Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA). These experiences crystalized her commitment to ethical seed stewardship and seed sovereignty. Maintaining seed free of restrictive intellectual property rights and preserving genetic diversity while adapting varieties to the pressures of place and climate change are a focus of the work of High Desert Seed + Gardens.



### ***Casey Piscura***

Casey Piscura is the founder and agricultural director of Seed Peace/The Farm collaborative and has been working in the local food movement since starting his farm Wild Mountain Seeds in Carbondale in 2013. Casey has a BS in Crop and Soil Science from Virginia Tech and has been expanding and sharing his knowledge of seed, regenerative agriculture and local food systems since his graduation in 2007. Casey has spent the past twelve years refining his skills and feeding the community through farmers markets, CSA shares, restaurants and small grocers while training farmers and others along the way. His seeds have attracted a nationwide and even international audience for their resilient nature, vigor, diversity, beauty and flavor, and have been proven to thrive on farms and gardens in the Roaring Fork Valley and beyond. Casey is known for having a knack for seeing how farms should align with natural processes and is known for his work with historic Sunfire Ranch developing a living regenerative model for future land management!



### ***Austin Kinzer***

In his role as Agrivoltaics Senior Technical Specialist, Austin works with a broad range of stakeholders to advance farmer-centered solar projects around the country and ensure agricultural communities benefit from the transition to clean energy. Originally from the Pacific Northwest, Austin is now based in Colorado where he earned a B.S. in Environmental Engineering from the University of Colorado Boulder and an M.S. in Advanced Energy Systems from Colorado School of Mines. Prior to joining AFT, Austin was a graduate intern at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) where he researched agrivoltaic irradiance modeling, contributed to technical reports on agrivoltaics and agricultural decarbonization, and presented at industry conferences. Prior to NREL, Austin worked in commercial and industrial solar development and served as a Climate Corps Fellow with the Environmental Defense Fund and Iron Mountain. Austin has also been a long-time volunteer at Jack's Solar Garden, one of the largest agrivoltaic crop production sites in the US. In addition to his work with AFT, Austin is a competitive athlete, coaching junior big mountain skiing for Team Summit Colorado and competing on the Freeride World Qualifier circuit. In his spare time, he enjoys mountain biking, backpacking, chess, and gardening.



### ***Sam Anderson***

Sam Anderson, CEM, is the Energy Specialist and Program Administrator for the ACRE3 energy grants program at the Colorado Department of Agriculture. He is an energy engineer with over 25 years of professional project engineering experience in agricultural applications of biomass energy, biodiesel, wind, solar, micro-hydro, geothermal, energy storage, and energy efficiency.



### ***Bre Owens***

Bre lives in Los Molinos, CA where she runs a small cattle operation utilizing mostly leased private and public lands. Bre grew up in Northern CA on a cow-calf ranch, attended Chico State and Colorado State University, focusing her studies on rangeland ecology and livestock production. Beyond CA, she has worked on cattle ranches in OR, NV, WY and HI. Bre's role at NatGLC is designed to bring western graziers needs and solutions into the organization's programs, policy and communications efforts, while sharing resources and facilitating partnerships across NatGLC's western network. In this capacity she works with livestock producers in all western states. She maintains a comprehensive understanding of current challenges and emerging opportunities relevant to grazing lands stewardship through these interactions and by running her own beef cattle operation. Additionally, she currently serves as the board chair of the CA Rangeland Conservation Coalition, board chair for Holistic Management International, President of the Cal-Pac Section of Society for Range Management, and is a CA Certified Rangeland Manager.



### ***Abram Rosenberg***

Abe Rosenberg started Jack Rabbit Hollow Farm with his wife and business partner Morgan Velasquez in 2013 which operates in the San Luis Valley. Together they have been developing a regenerative practice that is in alignment with the planet and has a focus on small solutions over extractive profits and a business model that holds giving back to the community as a primary goal along with protecting wildlife and the ecosystem. Using no-kill methods also spurred the development of Sanctuario de Rancho, a small farm animal and wildlife sanctuary. Abram has also worked in the agricultural non-profit sector for over a decade starting multiple community gardens and worked extensively with youth on projects associated with land stewardship and environmental leadership. He spent many years working on building local food systems and developing community partnerships around local food access in Southern Colorado. With an interest in natural healing and growing nature's medicine, Abram recently began working in healthcare while keeping up the farm as a source for growing and producing local health and wellness products and local foods.

