

# SAVING AMERICA'S WORKING LANDS

A National Conference Hosted by American Farmland Trust

**DALLAS, TEXAS | APRIL 23-25, 2025**

## Session: Agricultural Conservation Easements 101

### SPEAKERS



#### **Ben Kurtzman**

Director of Land Protection Projects  
American Farmland Trust

Ben directs AFT's in-house land trust function and is responsible for the stewardship of AFT's easements and fee lands. He previously managed law and policy research for AFT's Farmland Information Center. He has authored numerous research reports, fact sheets, and technical memoranda on farmland protection. Ben is a producer of "The Barber Farm," an award-winning film documenting his in-laws' efforts to protect their farm in Vermont. Ben completed undergraduate work at the University of Vermont and holds a degree in law from Suffolk University. Ben lives in Northampton, Massachusetts.



#### **Michael Delbar**

Chief Executive Officer  
California Rangeland Trust

Michael Delbar hails from a multi-generational ranching family in Mendocino and Lake Counties where they raise beef cattle, timber, and hay. Michael took the reins as Chief Executive Officer of the California Rangeland trust in 2020, after having served as the organization's Chief Operating Officer for more than a decade. Prior to joining the Rangeland Trust in 2010, Michael served three consecutive terms as the First District Supervisor for the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors and was Second Vice President of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC). He also served on the state and national agriculture policy advisory boards for the California State Association of Counties and the National Association of Counties. Additionally, Michael served for two years as the Lake County Farm Bureau Executive Director. Michael is currently a member of the board of directors for the Potter Valley Rodeo Association, was a former director of the Mendocino County Farm Bureau, and was state chair of California Young Farmers and Ranchers. Michael graduated from California State University, Chico with a degree in agricultural business and is a graduate of the California Agricultural Leadership Program, Class XXIV.



**Kelly Langdon**

Manager/Owner  
Fall Creek Ranch

A good first impression is the key to just about any relationship.

That was certainly the case for Kelly Langdon and his family as they contemplated a conservation easement on their family ranch in Hood County near Granbury, Texas. Fall Creek Ranch has been in the family for more than five decades, and in recent years, Kelly's mom had been exploring the idea of a conservation easement to forever protect the land they love.

The family heard about the Texas Agricultural Land Trust (TALT), and invited TALT CEO Chad Ellis out to the ranch for a visit.

"We had lunch at the kitchen table and talked about what an easement is and how it might benefit our family," recalled Kelly. "It was obvious that the TALT folks understand

farmers and ranchers, and we felt very comfortable after meeting them and decided to go down that path.”

Kelly’s parents closed on a conservation easement with TALT in 2021, which will forever protect 1,275 acres in Hood and Johnson counties in the Brazos River watershed.

In September 2021, the Langdons hosted a Texas Working Lands Innovation Summit presented by TALT, which brought together experts from all walks of life who shared their perspectives about what’s on the horizon for agricultural land conservation. For Kelly and his family, it was an eye-opening experience.

“That’s the first time I had really heard about carbon credits, and there’s so much more to explore about how they can benefit farmers and ranchers,” said Kelly. “It’s gratifying to know that TALT is on the cutting edge of these new innovations and I look forward to learning more.”

While Chad Ellis and TALT staff made a good impression on the Langdons, the reverse is also true. After the easement transaction closed, Chad reached out to Kelly to find out if he might be interested in serving on the TALT’s Board of Directors. After taking part in the September summit, learning more about TALT, and meeting a few fellow board members, Kelly stepped up to serve.

He brings a lot to the table. He and his wife, Kristyn live full time on Fall Creek Ranch, making them the third generation of Langdons to run and maintain the ranch. Kelly also holds volunteer agriculture leadership positions with different organizations such as Ag Lead, which is a Farm Bureau Leadership program. He also serves as the current Vice President for Hood/Somervell counties for the local Farm Bureau. Kelly graduated from Tarleton State University with a degree in AgBusiness and minors in economics and wildlife management. He looks forward to his service on the TALT board.

“Everybody on the board is all on the same page in terms of understanding what rural landowners in Texas are facing,” said Kelly. “It’s an honor to be asked to serve, and I look forward to helping to spread the message about the tools available to landowners in Texas to help them ensure the future of their family land.”



*Facilitator*

**Jennifer Dempsey**

Director of Farmland Information Center and Senior Advisor  
American Farmland Trust

Jennifer manages the FIC, a clearinghouse of resources used by AFT staff, agricultural landowners and farmers, concerned citizens, farmland protection professionals, planners, policymakers, academics, and the media. As part of this work, she oversees the FIC's nationwide surveys, including annual surveys of farmland protection programs, transfer of development rights programs, and a survey of land trusts that protect land for agriculture. Jennifer has written or supervised the development of FIC resources. She co-wrote AFT's "Farms Under Threat" report, "Cultivating the Next Generation: Resources and Policies to Help Beginning Farmers Succeed in Agriculture," and a land access curriculum on gaining access to land for beginning farmers. She is also currently managing the state policy scorecard for AFT's "Farms Under Threat" project. Jennifer served on the board of a local land trust and two terms on a local conservation commission. She currently serves on the USDA NASS Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics. Jennifer completed her undergraduate work at Mount Holyoke College and earned a Master of Science in resource management and administration from Antioch New England Graduate School.