

SAVING AMERICA'S WORKING LANDS

A National Conference Hosted by American Farmland Trust

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Session: Agrivoltaics: Opportunities and Challenges for Agriculture

SPEAKERS



Brendan Boepple

Director of Conservation

Colorado Cattlemen Agricultural Land Trust

Brendan Boepple is the Director of Conservation at the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT), where he leads the organization's efforts to protect Colorado's working lands, water resources, and open spaces. In this role, Brendan oversees land conservation transactions, stewardship initiatives, and the development of innovative programs that support agricultural stewards. Brendan developed a deep connection to western landscapes and communities while directing Colorado College's State of the Rockies Project, where he supervised research and public outreach on natural resource and socioeconomic issues in the Mountain West. He holds a B.A. in Political Science from Colorado College and a Master of Environmental Management from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.



Jesse Robertson-DuBois

Director of Sustainable Solar Development
BlueWave Energy

Jesse Robertson-DuBois is BlueWave’s Director of Sustainable Solar Development, focusing on commercial agrivoltaics. With expertise ranging from solar development to agricultural operations management and conservation policy, he works to integrate entrepreneurial and public-policy approaches to working landscapes with a focus on real, on-the-ground applications that improve the protection, stewardship and productivity of farm and forest lands for food, energy, and environmental services. He and his family live and farm in Northfield, Massachusetts, where they have been working with BlueWave and neighboring landowners to develop a 10-12 MW agrivoltaic assemblage on ~70+ acres. In addition to raising livestock and crops in agrivoltaic arrays, they also graze sheep in conventional solar arrays, and perform conservation grazing with goats.



Dave Specca

Project Lead, Rutgers Agrivoltaic Program
Rutgers University

Dave has been involved in agriculture his entire life. He grew up working on the family vegetable farm and is currently the Assistant Director at the Rutgers University EcoComplex, a clean energy research and commercialization center, where he focuses on agriculture-based sustainable energy production and utilization. Dave is the Project Lead for the Rutgers Agrivoltaic Program (RAP). This program was formed for the science-based implementation of economical, farmer-friendly Agrivoltaic (Dual Use) Systems.

Agrivoltaics holds the potential to combine renewable energy production with improved farm viability, which are both pressing issues in the Northeast Region. Dave also has extensive experience in controlled environment agriculture, hydroponics, aquaponics, landfill gas utilization and co-generation, and bioenergy production. Dave, along with his wife Lisa and their two sons, operate Specca Farms, a 210-acre u-pick and direct market vegetable farm in Burlington County. Dave holds a BS in Horticulture, and a MS in Plant Science, from Rutgers University.



Tim Fink

Vice President of Policy

American Farmland Trust

Tim develops AFT’s overall policy direction and strategies and coordinates federal and relevant state policy work in close collaboration with AFT’s national initiative leaders, regional directors, and partners. Before joining AFT, Tim was the director of research and policy analysis at the Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation, where he advocated for increases in USDA’s Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, fundraised for the National Academies’ “Science Breakthroughs 2030” project, and led the development of a series of Farm Bill Research Policy Recommendations endorsed by 66 organizations. Prior to that, he was project manager for the 25x’25 Alliance where he led collaborations among government agencies, non-profits, academia, and private industry that involved agricultural adaptation to climate change and rural renewable energy policy. He was also responsible for promoting and tracking developments related to the Farm Bill Energy Title. Tim has extensive experience in politics, including five political campaigns and as a legislative assistant to the chair of the House Energy Committee for Iowa’s General Assembly. Tim holds a master’s degree from Harvard and a Bachelor of Arts from Luther College.



Facilitator

Nathan L'Etoile

National Farm Viability Managing Director
American Farmland Trust

Nathan L'Etoile leads national efforts to elevate farm viability across AFT's programming with a specific focus on AFT's Smart Solar program, AFT's grant making efforts, including the Brighter Futures Fund, and AFT's work to advance business technical assistance to farmers. He formerly served as a contract lobbyist for AFT, and then as Director of American Farmland Trust's New England Regional program. Nathan has worked in support of the farming community throughout his career serving as assistant commissioner for the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources as director of government relations for Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Forest Alliance, Chair of Northeast SARE. Nathan currently serves on the board of several statewide and regional organizations including Chair of the Massachusetts Farm Service Agency State Committee, the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative, and the Massachusetts Environmental Trust. He is active in his family's diversified farm, Four Star Farms, Inc., located in western Massachusetts, which grows hops and operates an on-farm brewery.