



SAVING AMERICA'S WORKING LANDS

A National Conference Hosted by American Farmland Trust

DALLAS, TEXAS | APRIL 23-25, 2025

Pre-Conference Workshop: Soil Health Stewards Bootcamp

Through its Soil Health Stewards program, American Farmland Trust has trained staff from more than 125 land trusts and public Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) programs in promoting soil health with farmers, ranchers and landowners. Attend this short course version of the program to learn why soil health is inspiring farmers and their service providers nation-wide. We will highlight soil health basics, the economic benefits of soil health practices, and strategies to encourage better soil health as part of agricultural conservation easement acquisitions and stewardship.

Come see / hear:

- Watch it happen with multiple hands-on demonstrations: Do high functioning healthy soils hold up to intense rains, store more water for getting crops through dry times, and allow for groundwater recharge better than those under current conventional management?
- How one West Texas farmer makes it work (cover crops, multi-species covers, etc) in a dry climate!
- How much return on investment (ROI) in soil health might farmers be able to expect?
- Tips for preparing for your first conversation with easement landowners about soil health

Workshop agenda:

1:00 – 1:10 - Welcome, introductions, agenda review

1:10 – 1:15 - Promoting Soil Health on Protected Agricultural Lands: Touch Points

1:15 – 3:00 - Soil Health Basics, Benefits, Barriers, Practices

3:00-3:15 - Snack and Bio Break

3:15 – 4:00 - Economic Benefits of Soil Health

4:00-4:45 - Promoting Soil Health as part of land conservation

4:45 - Show Toolkit Resources and Wrap-Up

5:00 - Conclude

SPEAKERS



Bianca Moebius-Clune, PhD

Climate and Soil Health Director

American Farmland Trust

Bianca leads AFT's national Climate and Soil Health efforts to catalyze the nation's transition toward a new conventional agriculture that thrives with fully functioning healthy soils and systems that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and regenerate and maintain resilient, diverse, effective, environmentally, socially, and economically viable production systems across varied agricultural lands. Her program works collaboratively across partners and stakeholders to scale up successful approaches, on-ramp innovations, quantify outcomes, and reach new audiences for impact.

Programming is built to address needs of producers, the agricultural and conservation community, researchers, and policymakers, providing access to resources, science, decision support tools, technical advice, transformational connections, and messaging that expand climate-smart, regenerative agriculture, and food systems in diverse ways. Before joining AFT, Bianca served as the founding Director of the Soil Health Division with the USDA-NRCS from 2014-2021. She led the deployment and integration of the new division's staff of regional and national specialists who provide soil health leadership on NRCS strategy, policy, tools, training, direct assistance, science and technology integration across the country. She led the establishment of national soil health resource concerns, in-field and laboratory assessments, and management planning, training for agency certified conservation planners, and training and outreach to millions of customers. Prior to NRCS, Bianca served on the faculty of Cornell University as a Senior Extension Associate and Lecturer, where her research and extension work focused on agricultural management impacts on soil health and nitrogen dynamics. She also taught a class in Sustainable Soil Management. She has authored numerous peer-reviewed and extension publications, NRCS national technical material and policy, and has provided workshops and trainings nationally and internationally. She holds Ph.D. and Master of Science degrees from Cornell University and a Bachelor of Science from University of New Hampshire, all in soil science.



Jeremy Brown

Organic Regenerative Farmer

Broadview Agriculture

Jeremy farms with his wife Sarah and five children on their 4,200-acre Certified Organic and Certified Regenerative farm on the South Plains of West Texas. They grow organic cotton, wheat, rye, grain sorghum and multispecies cover crops. They integrate livestock to graze their cover crops in their effort to regenerate the land. The mission of Jeremy's farming operation, Broadview Agriculture Inc., is to steward and manage the natural resources God has given us to feed and clothe the world. Jeremy is committed to sustainable farming practices through the six soil health principles of Regenerative Agriculture and organic farming. They make soil health and water efficiency top priorities in being a sustainable farm. Jeremy serves on the Board of the Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative, Plains Cotton Growers, Inc., AgTexas Farm Credit and previously served as one of the U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance's Faces of Farming & Ranching. He has a degree in agriculture communications from Texas Tech University and worked professionally for 6 years before coming back to the farm. He has been actively involved in farming since he was given 40 acres of land to manage at the age of 15.



Kip Kolesinskas

Co-Chair

Working Lands Alliance

Kip is a Consulting Conservation Scientist. His current projects include assisting agencies, NGOs, and private individuals with farmland protection, land access and

affordability for new and beginning farmers, farmland restoration, and climate change adaptation strategies. He is the co-chair of the Working Lands Alliance Steering Committee, former member of the CT Council on Environmental Quality, and a USDA Climate Adaptation Fellow. Kip has contributed to numerous publications and initiatives including Conservation Options for Connecticut Farmland, and Planning for Agriculture – A Guide for Connecticut Municipalities. He is formerly a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service State Soil Scientist for Connecticut and Rhode Island, where he worked extensively with farmers, educators, government, and nonprofits to help them protect farmland and wetlands, and use soils information to make better informed land use decisions.



Michelle Perez, PhD

Water Initiative Director

American Farmland Trust

Michelle leads AFT's efforts to achieve better water quality and reduce agricultural non-point source pollution through a comprehensive initiative with links to outcomes quantification, soil health, climate, and ecosystem markets. Michelle previously served AFT as a senior policy specialist, where she researched, developed, and promoted innovative agricultural and conservation policies. Before joining AFT, Michelle worked at World Resources Institute, leading projects on nutrient trading, developing nutrient assessment tools, and quantifying environmental outcomes. She previously worked for Environmental Working Group and Alliance to Save Energy. During her career, Michelle has published numerous reports and papers. She currently serves as council member of the Soil Water Conservation Society's National Capital Chapter. She is an alumna of Occidental College where she studied biology. She holds a Doctorate in environmental policy from the University of Maryland School of Public Policy where her dissertation was a three-state comparative case study of farm nutrient management regulations in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

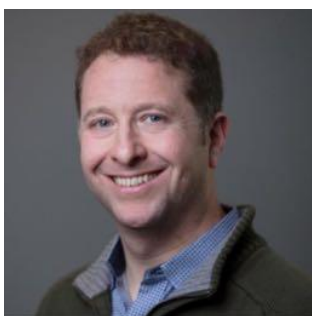


Chellie Maples, PhD

Agricultural Economist

American Farmland Trust

Chellie joined AFT's Water Initiative in February of 2023. She primarily conducts research on the economic effects of adopting soil health practices in row crop systems. She works to create decision support tools for producers who are curious about implementing conservation practices on their farms. In addition to tool development, Chellie works with the AFT Case Study team as a reviewing economist. She has a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from Oklahoma State University, an M.S. in Agricultural Economics from Mississippi State University and a Bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of North Alabama.



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.



Facilitator

Cris Coffin

Senior Policy Advisor; Director, National Agricultural Land Network
American Farmland Trust

Cris helps guide AFT's federal and state policy engagement. She also directs the National Agricultural Land Network, which supports state and local governments, land trusts, agricultural service providers, planners, and conservation organizations and builds their capacity to advance farmland protection. From 2015 to 2018, Cris served as policy director for Land For Good, a New England-based organization with which AFT often collaborates. But before that, Cris served as AFT's New England director for fourteen years. She has held several positions in the U.S. Senate, including as professional staff on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and as chief of staff to Senator Herb Kohl. She has worked for Resources for the Future and the Vermont Department of Agriculture. Cris co-chairs the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative and serves on her town's Agriculture Commission. Cris farms part-time with her husband, running a small, pastured poultry operation in western Massachusetts. She is an alumna of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and holds a Juris Doctor from Georgetown University.