



WASHINGTON COUNTY FOOD SUMMIT

Washington Count Food Summit
Speaker and Summit Organizer Bios

SPEAKER BIOS

Marada Cook

I am an entrepreneur, building businesses that support Maine farmers and food producers. I look for opportunities to leverage a region, whether that's Aroostook County or the entire state of Maine, to feed the growing appetite for foods with a sense of HERE. My sister Leah and I run three companies: Crown O' Maine, Northern Girl, and Fiddler's Green Farm, with the support of some of Maine's finest local food enthusiasts. I do have a lengthy list of daily to-do's, but along side of that I try to keep an eye out for the 100 year vision for our farms and businesses.

Sam Cheeney

Sam Cheeney of Salty Dog Farm runs a small diversified farm with partner Sasha Alsop in coastal Milbridge, Maine. Sam grew up on a tree farm in rural NH near the fertile Connecticut River Valley and has been farming or homesteading incorporating forestry, maple sugaring, dairy, horses, home gardening (and construction at every step along the way) his whole life. Salty Dog Farm is now in their fifth season as a market farm. His philosophy and goals on farming can be summed up in one word - sustainability. Using this philosophy he can work from home and provide his growing family with the highest quality food and environment, while providing the community and area schools with high quality, affordable food. Sam is also the driving force behind the growing Small Potatoes Farm Coop, which currently shares fields, markets, produce, farming logistics, and resources with two other small local farms: Folklore Farm in Columbia, and Living Roots Farm in Cherryfield. Sam is passionate about having more area farmers join the coop.

Vera Francis

Vera Francis is an American Indian educator, environmental activist, and community planner for the Passamaquoddy people. She resides in Perry, Maine within the Pleasant Point (Sipayik) Reservation. Francis writes and speaks frequently about environmental issues and tribal politics in newspapers, at conferences and on websites. As part of the non-profit Ntulankeyutmonen Nkitahkomikon, Francis has advocated for the environmental preservation of Pleasant Point-Passamaquoddy ancestral territory. Most currently she has been a lead voice in addressing food production and sovereignty issues in her community. Passamaquoddy Tribal Planner, Pleasant Point, Perry.

Tora Johnson

Tora Johnson is the director of the GIS Laboratory and Service Center at the University of Maine at Machias where she teaches computer mapping and environmental studies. She and her students use maps, computer models, and methods of effective facilitation to support Downeast communities as they grapple with complex decisions in a changing world. Recent projects at the UMM GIS Service Center include digitizing tax maps and creating inexpensive shoreland zoning maps to allow more local control in planning.

Wendy Harrington

Wendy Harrington is the Downeast Campus Program Director for the Maine Sea Coast Mission. The Downeast Campus programs provide assistance with basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. In addition to helping with immediate needs, our programs work to nurture a healthy, caring community.

Will Hopkins

Will Hopkins is the Executive Director and founder of the Cobscook Bay Resource Center, which is a not-for-profit organization working since 1998 for sustainable community development based on the Bay's renewable resources. He helped local fishermen organize the Cobscook Bay Fishermen's Association and develop scallop conservation plans for the Bay. Will is currently working to establish a local and regional food hub in a licensed commercial kitchen and marketing co-op facility where fishermen, farmers and gardeners can process and sell Cobscook Bay scallops and farm produce.

John Jemison, Jr.

John Jemison, Jr. is the Maine Cooperative Extension Professor of Soil and Water Quality, and a member of the graduate faculty at UMaine. His research interests include nutrient and weed management supplies, water quality, and local food production. John is the chair of the Maine Board of Pesticides Control and is active with the Co-operative Extension's Watershed Stewards and Think Globally Eat Locally programs.

Amber Lambke

Amber Lambke is the president of the company, executive director of the Maine Grain Alliance (host of the annual KNEADING Conference), committee chair for Main Street Skowhegan, board member with the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences, volunteer with the Skowhegan Farmer's Market, a mom, wife, former speech-language pathologist, home baker and gardener.

John Piotti

John Piotti of Unity is executive director of Maine Farmland Trust, an award-winning statewide non-profit organization that has helped over 475 Maine farms remain viable and helped protect over 38,000 acres of Maine's best farmland. John has worked on agriculture issues for the past 18 years. Through 2006, he managed all the farm programs for Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI). He has served as chair of the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG) and a director of the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture. From 2002 to 2010 John also served in Maine's Legislature, where he chaired the Agriculture Committee and also served as House Majority Leader. John holds three degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT): in engineering, public policy, and management.

Lisa Ravis

Lisa Ravis has been combining her interests in agriculture and maps through classes in the GIS Program at the University of Maine at Machias.

Erin Sweeney

Erin Sweeney is the Agriculture Organizer for Food AND Medicine, a non-profit with a mission to organize, educate, and empower workers and our communities in the fight for economic and social justice. Her work with FAM strives to support small farmers while increasing access to local food for all residents. She moved to Maine in 2012 from rural Pennsylvania where she organized a community garden owned and led by low-income families, which inspires her work today.

Laura Teisl

Laura Teisl is a student in the GIS program at the University of Maine at Machias and owns a web design business. Incorporating GIS maps into web design is her current focus.

Cheryl Wixson

Cheryl Wixson grew up on a dairy farm in Winslow, Maine. She is a third generation graduate of the University of Maine, and is the University's first woman agricultural engineer. After 10 years in the pulp and paper and telecommunications industry, Wixson founded a catering company and small restaurant that served international cuisine featuring organic Maine products. The last meal served at her restaurant was a nine-

course meal featuring Petunia, Wixson's pig, that achieved international notoriety when code enforcement determined it was residing illegally in the same neighborhood as novelist Stephen King. Cheryl then retired from the restaurant business to bake cookies and raise crops, rabbits and three daughters on her organic, urban farm in Bangor. In 1999, Wixson built a state-of-the art kitchen and educational facility dedicated to teaching people the joys and benefits of healthy eating and cooking utilizing Maine products while supporting a sustainable environment. Cheryl is a food columnist for the Bangor Daily News, consults with restaurants from Maine to California, develops recipes for food manufacturers and hosted two Maine Public Television series, the latest being What's for Suppah?. She has studied food science and human nutrition at the University of Maine, is a master composter, and teaches kindergarten children that food comes from farms.

SUMMIT ORGANIZERS

Stacy Benjamin

Stacy is a planning consultant with Maine Collaborative Planning and has 25 years of experience in rural planning at the local, regional and statewide levels. She currently provides municipal outreach services under contract with Maine Farmland Trust and works to help communities become more farm-friendly. Previously, Stacy served four years on the Land Use Team at the Maine State Planning Office, including two years as the Director of the Land Use Planning Program. She has a Master's in Regional Planning from the University of Massachusetts.

Judy East

Judy is Executive Director for the Washington County Council of Governments. With 25 years of professional experience at the local, regional and state levels in Maine, New York and Vermont she currently works with communities throughout Washington County on varied issues in land use planning, economic development, adaptation to climate change and public facilities investment. Judy is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners with a Bachelors Degree in Biology and Economics and a Masters Degree of Science in Planning. She has a particular interest and expertise working with rural communities as they balance land and resource conservation with economic development. She lives Calais, ME with her husband Richard and their daughter Alyson. They operate Growing Concern, a farm and nursery providing a retail outlet for locally grown horticultural products and food as well as the Calais Local Food Buying Club.

Regina Grabrovac

Regina Grabrovac is the Downeast Farm to School Coordinator for Healthy Acadia in partnership with Washington County: One Community, overseeing Washington County's programming and supervising the county's FoodCorps Service Member. Regina is a powerful community organizer who works to collaborate with multiple agencies and organizations in order to accomplish goals, has contributed to multiple local-food-systems sustainability initiatives across the state and, single-handedly initiated the FTS program in Washington County. She has most recently developed the Washington County Community Food Council. Regina has a strong background in agriculture, small-scale farming, does farm and process inspections for organic certification nationally and internationally, and grows, harvests and gathers food for her family here in East Machias.

Tricia Rouleau

Tricia Rouleau works as a Lands Projects Coordinator for Maine Farmland Trust, a non-profit organization working to preserve Maine's productive agricultural lands. Tricia's current coverage area includes Washington, Hancock, Penobscot and Somerset counties. Prior to working for MFT, she was a Senior Project Manager at FB Environmental Associates, an environmental consulting firm specializing in GIS mapping and watershed and land use planning. Tricia became actively involved in farming and food systems after moving to downeast Maine in 1998. She has worked at several small farms including Happytown Farm in Orland, Beech Hill Farm in

Mount Desert and also served as a Soil Conservation Technician for the Maine NRCS in Ellsworth. Tricia resides and gardens in Ellsworth, Maine with her husband and daughter.

Elizabeth Sprague

Elizabeth joined Maine Farmland Trust in 2013 to develop and manage MFT's Farm Business Development capability. Prior to her work with MFT she proposed, designed, and implemented AG and food security projects that served as the foundation for much of the AG infrastructure development and AG-entrepreneur projects in Eastern Maine. Elizabeth was an original advisor to Sunrise County Food Alliance, a farmer-to-farmer network. She serves on the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors at Cobscook Bay Resource Center and advises on food hub development. She has been active in Slow Money/ Maine since 2010. Elizabeth designed and taught business practices curriculum to micro-entrepreneurs for seven years and originated advanced curriculum for Incubator Without Walls (IWW) programming. She holds a B.A at Antioch University and an MFA from Mills College as well as certifications in NxLevel Entrepreneurship Training, Oweesta Indianpreneurship Training, project management, and grant writing. She is listed in *Feminists Who Changed America*.

Taylor Weiss

With FoodCorps, Taylor returns for a second term in Machias where she integrates garden and orchard based nutrition education into Washington County School classrooms, provides support for development of School Supported Agriculture (SSA) with County Food Services, and plans to provide support and resources for school gardens in County schools.