



# “Nourishing and (Re)Imagining Collaboration, Conservation, and Community”

**Tuesday, December 12th & Wednesday, December 13th, 2023**

Starting each day at 8:45 a.m.

**Blue Ridge Community College, Plecker Workforce Center  
One College Lane, Weyers Cave, Virginia 24486**

Speakers and panelists will address and discuss regenerative agriculture, safety trauma, emotional ecology, drought resilience, managing pasture, the power of land and agency, community food webs and clusters, connections between soil health and human health, diversifying and stacking complementary enterprises, value chain connections, market development, local and regional food system development.

Conference details at <https://www.4thsoil.org/va-farm-to-table-conference>



Dr. Elizabeth Heilman  
Professor of Education  
of Wichita State  
University



Dale Strickler, Chief  
Agronomist, Regenerative  
Wisdom and author of  
*Drought Resilient Farm*



Dr. Gail Myers of  
Farms to Grow, Inc.  
and Director of  
*Rhythms of the Land*



Dr. Heather Coiner of  
Little Hat Creek Farm  
and Common Grain  
Alliance



Ken Meter of Crossroads  
Resource Center and author  
of *Building Community Food  
Webs*



Dr. David R. Montgomery &  
Anne Biklé authors of *What  
Your Food Ate*



Dr. Pedro Aponte of Saint  
Isidore Homestead and  
Permaculture



Daniel Austin of Lit-  
tle Red Hen Farm  
and Green Sprig Ag

On Tuesday afternoon, there will be a special exclusive screening of *Rhythms of the Land*, a multimedia documentary film directed by Dr. Gail Myers, a cultural anthropologist, farmer, and co-founder of Farms to Grow Inc.. For more information about the networking and social time, please contact Eric Bendfeldt at 540-232-6006.

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

## DAY 1 — TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2023

8:00 — 8:45 AM	<b>REGISTRATION &amp; REFRESHMENTS</b> (FOYER & ROOM C)
8:45 — 9:00 AM	<p><b>OPENING &amp; LOGISTICS</b> (ROOM A &amp; B)</p> <p>Eric Bendfeldt, Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Mary Sketch Bryant, Virginia Tech and the Virginia Soil Health Coalition</p> <p><b>INTRODUCTION OF VISIONING AND PLANNING ACTIVITY:</b></p>
9:00 — 9:10 AM	<b>WELCOME</b> (Room A & B) – Dr. Michael Gutter, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension and Associate Dean, Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
9:10 — 10:00 AM	<p><b>NURTURING ROOTS OF RESILIENCE: HARVESTING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE</b> (Room A &amp; B)</p> <p>Dr. Elizabeth Heilman, Professor of Education, Wichita State University and National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)</p>
10:00 — 10:50 AM	<p><b>CREATING A DROUGHT RESILIENT FARM</b> (Room A &amp; B)</p> <p>Dale Strickler, Chief Agronomist of Regenerative Wisdom, farmer, and author of <i>The Drought Resilient Farm, Managing Pasture, and Restoring Your Soil</i></p>
11:00— 11:50 AM	<p><b>REVIVING THE MID-ATLANTIC GRAIN ECONOMY</b></p> <p>Dr. Heather Coiner of Little Hat Creek Farm and Common Grain Alliance</p>
11:50AM — NOON	<p><b>INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS OF VISIONING AND PLANNING ACTIVITY</b></p> <p>Eric Bendfeldt, Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Dr. Elizabeth Heilman, Professor of Education, Wichita State University and facilitators</p>
12:00 — 2:00 PM	<p><b>LUNCH</b> Catered by Harvest Table of Dayton, Virginia (ROOMS A, B, &amp; C)</p> <p><b>PRESENTATION OF 2023 CARL LUEBBEN SOIL HEALTH AND WATER QUALITY AWARD</b></p> <p><b>SPURRED CREATIVITY: VISIONING AND PLANNING EXERCISE</b></p> <p>What would you want to exist and be present that does not currently exist in relation to food security, quality and justice; equitable access to land, capital, and equipment; improving soil and water health; reducing drought, erosion, and flood; and new solutions for regional food systems and stacked enterprises?</p>
2:00 — 3:00 PM	<p><b>EXCLUSIVE SCREENING OF RHYTHMS OF THE LAND</b> (AUDITORIUM)</p> <p>Dr. Myers of Farms To Grow, Inc. started the documentary project in 2012 and toured 10 southern states -- Texas, Arkansas, South Carolina, North Carolina, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee and Florida – to interview over 30 farmers, sharecroppers, gardeners, and a 5th generation coil basket weaver. Several of the interviews were with elders ranging in ages from 92 to 109. These interviews represent generations of cultural traditions of Black farming philosophy that honors land, sustainability, God, family and love for their community.</p>
3:00 — 4:00 PM	<p><b>WHY LAND IS IMPORTANT FOR LIBERATION: LAND HAS SO MUCH POWER</b> (AUDITORIUM)</p> <p>Dr. Gail Myers, Cultural Anthropologist, Co-Founder of Farms to Grow Inc., Director and Producer of <i>Rhythms of the Land</i></p> <p>In this talk, Dr. Myers enlightens that beyond the intrinsic value of land, the place-based relationship furthers a collective work and responsibility ethic, and a sense of power. As all-Black towns developed in the late 19th and 20th centuries, it was the collective approach that sustained these Black communities. Landowners donated parcels of land for building churches and schools for the entire community. Black Farmers and ranchers maintained agrarian traditions that provided the provisions to maintain traditional food ways.</p>
4:00 — 4:30 PM	<p><b>REFLECTIONS, NETWORKING, AND MUSIC BY THE FLIP CHARTS</b> (ROOMS A &amp; B)</p> <p>What have you heard? What are you most excited about? What new alliances have you formed?</p>

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

## DAY 2 — WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2023

8:00 — 8:45 AM	<b>REGISTRATION &amp; REFRESHMENTS</b> (FOYER & ROOM C)
8:45 — 9:00 AM	<b>OPENING &amp; LOGISTICS</b> (AUDITORIUM) Eric Bendfeldt, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Mary Sketch Bryant, Virginia Tech and the Virginia Soil Health Coalition
9:00 — 9:10 AM	<b>WELCOME— COLLABORATION, CONSERVATION, AND COMMUNITY</b> (ROOMS A & B) Dr. Edwin Martinez, State Conservationist, Virginia USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
9:10—10:00 AM	<b>HOW DO WE (RE)IMAGINE AND CHANGE THE SYSTEMS THAT BRING US FOOD?</b> (ROOMS A & B) Ken Meter of Crossroads Resource Center and author of <i>Building Community Food Webs</i>
10:00 — 10:40 AM	<b>SUSTAINABLE ECOLOGY OF CARE FOR THE COMMON GOOD</b> (Rooms A & B) Dr. Pedro Aponte of Saint Isidore Homestead & Permaculture and James Madison University's Music Department
10:40 — 11:00 AM	<b>RESTORE THE SOIL AND SKIN OF THE EARTH</b> Dale Strickler, Chief Agronomist of Regenerative Wisdom, farmer. and author of <i>The Drought Resilient Farm, Managing Pasture, and Restoring Your Soil</i>
11:00 AM — 12: 00 PM	<b>WHAT YOUR FOOD ATE: HOW TO HEAL OUR LAND AND RECLAIM OUR HEALTH</b> (ROOMS A & B via ZOOM) Dr. David Montgomery and Anne Biklé authors of <i>What Your Food Ate, Growing a Revolution, The Hidden Half of Nature, and Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations.</i>
12:00 — 1:30 PM	<b>LUNCH</b> Catered by Harvest Table of Dayton, Virginia (ROOMS A, B, & C) <b>VIDEO: AGAINST THE GRAIN, BEYOND THE GRIND</b> <b>(RE)IMAGINING COMMUNITY, DEMOCRACY, AND A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE</b> (Room A & B) Dr. Elizabeth Heilman, Professor of Education, Wichita State University
<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS I</b> 1:30 — 2:45 PM	<b>A CASE STUDY IN FARM DIVERSIFICATION: WHAT WE'VE LEARNED SO FAR ABOUT SOIL, ECONOMIC, AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS</b> (AUDITORIUM) Daniel Austin of Little Red Hen Farm and Green Sprig Ag <b>SOIL FOR WATER: REGENERATIVE GRAZING AND SOIL HEALTH SYSTEMS PART I</b> (ROOM A) Dale Strickler of Regenerative Wisdom and Lee Rinehart, National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) moderated by Becky Szarzynski of Virginia Forage and Grassland Council (VFGC) <b>VIRGINIA URBAN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS INITIATIVE</b> (ROOM B) Kim Niewolny, Director, VT Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation, Steph Zhu, PhD student, Virginia Tech, and Renee Foster, County Executive Director, Farm Service Agency Urban Ag Committee <b>PUBLIC IMAGE WORKS JUMPSTART: FROM CLARITY TO IDENTITY TO PUBLICITY PART I</b> (ROOM P122) Ennis Carter and Social Impact Studios team
<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS II</b> 2:45 — 4:00 PM	<b>SMALL GRAINS FROM FARM-TO-TABLE PANEL DISCUSSION</b> (AUDITORIUM) Nico Melas of Mill Song Bakery, Aaron Grigsby of Deep Roots Milling at Woodson Mill, Daniel Austin of Green Sprig Ag. Moderated by Madelyn Smith of Common Grain Alliance <b>SOIL FOR WATER: REGENERATIVE GRAZING AND SOIL HEALTH SYSTEMS PART II</b> (ROOM A) Brent Wills of Bramble Hollow Farm, Sarah Morton and Ralph Morton of Cattle Run Farm, and Erin Shibley of Virginia Working Landscapes. Moderated by Becky Szarzynski of VFGC. <b>REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT</b> (ROOM B) Ken Meter of Crossroads Resource Center, Michelle Edwards of Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Planning Commission, and Mo McGonagle of Roanoke Foodshed Network. Moderated by Katie Trozzo, Ph.D., of the VT Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation. <b>PUBLIC IMAGE WORKS JUMPSTART: FROM CLARITY TO IDENTITY TO PUBLICITY PART II</b> (ROOM P122) Ennis Carter and Social Impact Studios team
4:00 — 4:30PM	<b>REFLECTIONS, DEBRIEF, AND CLOSING MUSIC BY THE FLIP CHARTS</b> (Rooms A & B) <b>SAFE TRAVELS!</b>

### You Can Do Your Part:

1

#### Keep Soil Covered

It's the first step in protecting it from erosion, but also buffers soil temperature, slows rainfall runoff, and aids rainfall infiltration.

2

#### Minimize Soil Disturbance

Both physical and chemical. This proactive measure can heal and protect properties of the soil and ultimately enhance the biological component of soil life.



3

#### Maximize Living Roots

Doing this longer throughout the year fuels biological activity, aids nutrient cycling, and contributes to improved soil structure.

4

#### Energize with Diversity

Use different crop species and integrate livestock where possible for specific purposes to enhance chemical, physical and/or biological aspects of the soil. It improves the whole system.

Learn more and  
**SIGN THE PLEDGE**  
[4thesoil.org](http://4thesoil.org)



<b>Program Name:</b>	<b>2023 VIRGINIA FARM TO TABLE CONFERENCE</b>
<b>Program Location:</b>	<b>BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WEYERS CAVE, VIRGINIA</b>
<b>Program Date(s):</b>	<b>DECEMBER 12—13, 2023</b>

Your assistance and feedback is needed to improve farm-to-table and regional foods systems programming.

1. If you are a farmer or food business owner, what **one to three educational points or take-home messages** did you learn that you plan to implement on your farm or adopt in your business?

2. If you are an educator, extension agent, conservationist, or technical service provider, what **one to three educational points or take-home messages** did you learn that you would share with a farmer/producer or wider audience that you work with?

3. Regarding the visioning and planning activity, please indicate **any action** you might take on a personal, organizational, and/or community level related to **food security, quality, and justice**;; **equitable access to land, capital, and equipment**; **increasing soil and water health**; and **new solutions to regional food systems and stacked enterprises**?

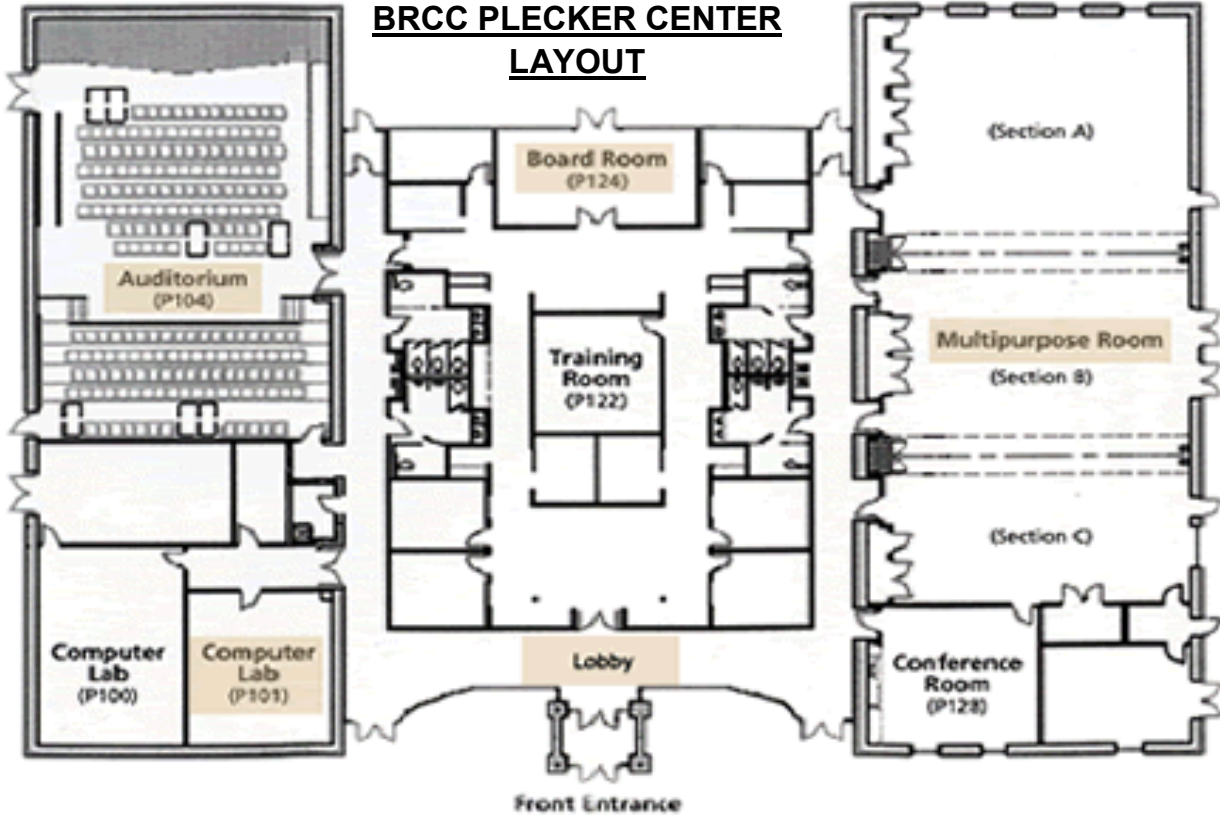
4. Regarding the theme of **collaboration and alliances**, please indicate **any action** you might take on an interpersonal, organizational, and/or community level?

5. Please comment here with anything else you feel **important to share about your experience**.

6. Other venues to consider for future conferences? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Would you be interested in serving on the conference planning committee? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

8. Name and email: \_\_\_\_\_



**Special Thanks to Our Community Partners and Exhibitors**



**Shenandoah Valley Beekeepers Association**

*Local Beekeepers in Shenandoah Valley VA*