

Speaker Descriptions

Dr. Kelsey Leonard

Dr. Kelsey Leonard is a water scientist, legal scholar, policy expert, writer, and enrolled citizen of the Shinnecock Nation. Her work focuses on Indigenous water justice and its climatic, territorial, and governance underpinnings for our shared sustainable future. Dr. Leonard represents the Shinnecock Nation on the Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean, which is charged with protecting America's ocean ecosystems and coastlines. She also serves as a member of the Great Lakes Water Quality Board of the International Joint Commission. Dr. Leonard has been instrumental in safeguarding the interests of Indigenous Nations for environmental planning, and builds Indigenous science and knowledge into new solutions for sustainable water and ocean governance.



Isabel Friend

Isabel Friend is an international water advocate, speaker, activist and educator. She has been studying water for 12 years and teaching about water for 6 years in 6 countries. She's passionate about bringing modern scientific understanding together with ancient ancestral wisdom in a way that grounds primal elemental practices into our 21st century lifestyles.



Finian Makepeace

Finian Makepeace is the co-founder of Kiss the Ground and a renowned presenter, media creator, and thought leader in the field of regenerative agriculture and soil health. His dedication to Kiss the Ground's mission of "inspiring participation in global regeneration, starting with soil", has motivated him to develop training programs, workshops, and talks designed to empower people around the world to become confident advocates for this growing movement.



Minni Jain

Minni Jain is the Operations Director of the Flow Partnership, UK, working globally on community driven decentralized catchment and landscape restoration. Her skills are in partnership building at all levels and together, achieving shared community objectives. Through setting up a water school, she is helping make accessible to communities globally, traditional, scientifically backed methods of reviving rivers and stopping flooding.

Dr. Sarah Hippensteel-Hall

Sarah Hippensteel-Hall is The Miami Conservancy District's manager of watershed partnerships. She builds diverse partnerships throughout the Great Miami River Watershed – a 15 county region in southwest Ohio.



Mike Ekberg

As the Manager of The Miami Conservancy District (MCD)'s Water Monitoring Program, Mike oversees all MCD hydrologic data collection. His hydrologic data collection networks include precipitation observers, tipping bucket rain gages, stream-gaging stations, observation wells, monitoring wells, and automated river sampling stations. He is also responsible for providing forecasted river stage data during high water events to our field staff and recording water storage and peak river stage at MCD dams and flood protection features. In addition, he works with federal and state water agencies as well as local universities on various water research projects that provide knowledge and insight on managing our regions natural water resources.



Kim Nace

As Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Rich Earth Institute, she has focused her leadership and organizational strengths to build a high performance team at the Institute and to engage others in the possibilities and practicalities of urine recycling. Kim and her family use a urine diverting composting toilet.



Deborah Leonard

Deborah Leonard has served as the Communications Manager for the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSD) since 2015. Prior to joining MSD, she worked for several local environmental consulting firms and two daily newspapers. She has 29 years of experience in the field of environmental communications. Ms. Leonard has a Bachelor's degree in journalism from Indiana University in Bloomington, Ohio, and a Master's degree in environmental science from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.



Basia Irland

Basia Irland is an ecological activist, sculptor, installation artist, and author whose work focuses on international water issues, especially rivers, waterborne diseases, and water scarcity. Her work offers a creative understanding of water while examining how communities of people, plants, and animals rely on this vital element.



Jake Stockwell

Jacob Stockwell is an alumnus from Antioch College with a B.A. in Peace Studies. Since 2005 he has directly supported Dine' families of Black Mesa resisting relocation and massive natural resource extraction by herding sheep for Dine' elders. Jacob is also an avid organic farm worker, who spent several summers working on organic farms in the Miami River Valley of Ohio. This past summer, Jacob joined the Movement to Stop Line 3 within Anishinaabeg and Dakota territories of so-called Minnesota. He is a co-defendant, alongside hundreds, who are being criminalized for the defense of Mother Earth, Wild Rice, and Indigenous Peoples Treaty Rights.



Amber Hasan and Shea Cobb Flint (The Sister Tour)

The Sister Tour is a community organization of artists from Flint MI created in the midst of a man-made water crisis that is a creative response, expression of resilience and a form of social justice for the people of Flint that continue to live without access to clean water and who pay the highest water bills in the country. Proceeds from the sale of the designated print and any additional donations given at GBE for the Sister Tour will fund performances and workshops on campuses and social media throughout the country.



Deborah Jordan & Jim Schenk (Citizens for Rights of the Ohio River Watershed)

CROW recognizes the sacred rights of the Ohio River Watershed to flourish as a life-giving natural ecosystem. They are thus called as a community to listen to the river's voice in order to protect and restore the beauty and biodiversity of its air, water, and soil.



Eric Fuchs

Eric Fuchs lives in Southeast Missouri on a diversified livestock operation where he raises hair sheep and contract grazes all classes of cattle. Eric also works in the water and wastewater industry as a source water protection technician. He works with small and large communities and with agricultural producers to help ensure community water protection. His efforts help save millions of dollars in costly water treatment system upgrades while also negating the need for long-term regulations. He has seen firsthand the problems with agriculture land use and its effect on drinking water.



Miriam Belblidia

Director of Research and Advocacy at Imagine Water Works. She is a leader in the New Orleans water sector, who has dedicated herself to reducing risk from flooding and environmental hazards for over fifteen years. She founded Louisiana Water Works in 2012, serving as Co-Founder and CEO from 2012-2018. Miriam was a co-founder and the first President of the Water Collaborative of Greater New Orleans, a 300-member regional water management group. In 2018, she joined the University of Pittsburgh's faculty as a Visiting Senior Lecturer and Director of the Center for Disaster Management. She has championed increased community engagement in planning and decision-making and works alongside residents using a co-creation model to advance a shared vision for "living with water."



Klie Kliebert

Klie Kliebert (they/them) joined Imagine Water Works in 2015 and became its Executive Director in early 2019. Klie is a native New Orleanian with deep, multi-generational family ties to St. James Parish who brings a unique blend of experience in communications and grassroots organizing, social and community science, and nonprofit management to the team. As a mixed Cajun, Creole and Chitimacha person, Klie also has a passion for telling the story of Louisiana, in particular with an intersectional racial and gender analysis..



Dr. Laura Sullivan

Dr. Laura Sullivan is a Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Kettering University in Flint, Michigan. From 2015-present, Dr. Sullivan has been a liaison between Flint residents and city/state officials, state regulators, the EPA, physicians, public health officials, and research scientists. She has witnessed the catastrophic destruction of trust that Flint residents once had for leaders. She will present novel approaches she has taken to this trust - approaches that have their genesis in Humanitarian Aid works in the developing world.

