



# **5<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DELAWARE COUNTY SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup>, 2026 AT  
SWARTHMORE COLLEGE**



**Delaware County**  
**Sustainability Conference**

# WELCOME TO THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE!



**ELAINE PAUL  
SCHAEFER**  
DELAWARE  
COUNTY COUNCIL

Elaine Paul Schaefer was elected to Delaware County Council in November of 2019 and sworn in on January 6, 2020. She is an attorney with a background in non-profit management and environmental advocacy. Elaine received her undergraduate degree from Boston College and her law degree from William and Mary. In addition to serving on County Council, she currently serves as the Executive Director of the Schuylkill River Greenways National Heritage Area.



**CONLEN  
BOOTH**  
MAYOR OF  
SWARTHMORE  
BOROUGH

Conlen Booth is the Mayor of Swarthmore Borough and Chief of the Swarthmore Fire & Protective Association. With over 20 years of experience in emergency management, healthcare preparedness, and public safety - including serving as Operations Section Chief supporting New York City Emergency Management during the height of the city's asylum seeker response - he advances community resilience, sustainable operations, and regional preparedness initiatives.



**ELIZABETH  
DRAKE**  
SWARTHMORE COLLEGE  
SUSTAINABILITY &  
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Elizabeth Drake is the Assistant Vice President for Sustainability & Strategic Initiatives at Swarthmore College, leading the Office of Sustainability's efforts to integrate sustainability into every aspect of campus life including teaching, learning, operations, and culture. She also serves as a consulting advisor to the president and other campus partners in the planning, implementing, and monitoring of projects to facilitate strategic change at the College, including the implementation of Swarthmore Forward, the College's strategic plan.

# INTRODUCING THE DAY'S EMCEES

## MORNING SESSIONS



**BECCA YURKOVICH**  
DELAWARE COUNTY OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Becca Yurkovich has worked in the Delaware County Office of Sustainability since 2022, first as the Sustainability and Resilience Manager before moving into her current role in January 2025. Becca previously worked as an Environmental, Community and Regional Planner in the Delaware County Planning Department, followed by three years as the Assistant Manager of Bethel Township. She holds bachelor's degrees in Environmental, Geographical, and Geological Sciences and Communication Studies from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.

## ZERO WASTE PANEL



**JACLYN RHOADS**  
DELAWARE COUNTY SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Jaclyn Rhoads holds a Doctorate Degree in environmental policy from Drexel University. She is currently the president of Friends of Heinz Refuge and the president of Darby Creek Valley Association. She works as Assistant Executive Director at the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and teaches environmental classes at Drexel University and Widener University. She is a member of Norwood's Environmental Advisory Committee and appointed public member to the Delaware County Sustainability Commission. Jaclyn received Environmental Advocate of the Year Award from the National Association of Women Business Owners, South Jersey Chapter in 2017 and the PennFuture Woman of the Delaware River Watershed Award in 2018.

## LIGHTNING ROUNDS



**MICHAEL SCHNELLER**  
DELAWARE COUNTY SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Michael Schneller has worked with PECO's energy reduction programs for the last nine years. He is a BPI certified senior energy auditor and market outreach specialist. Mike is also a real estate broker and has bought and sold energy efficient properties with his clients both here and New York for over 25 years. He understands the many benefits of energy efficiency and home performance for the homeowner, present comfort and cost savings coupled with a true increase in resale value. Mike works closely with PECO program directors and marketing managers as an effort to reduce usage in our region. By changing the way we use energy, he hopes to save our planet... one house at a time.

# KEYNOTE SPEAKER



## IS THIS THE PLACE FOR ME?

My Personal and Professional Journey in Downtown Scranton



**9:10-9:50AM**  
**LPAC PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

Through vivid storytelling, Steve Ward will take audiences on his journey of working with Scranton Tomorrow, highlighting the encouraging, relatable, and surprising outcomes from his experiences of engaging the community. Steve will highlight how nature-based programs have shaped the efforts of volunteers, making Downtown Scranton the best it can be. As the Keynote, this presentation sets the tone for the day, not only encouraging audiences think outside of the box, but to keep the positive momentum going in our communities.

**STEVE WARD**  
SCRANTON TOMORROW  
PROJECT MANAGER



**Delaware County**  
Sustainability Conference

# SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

## OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

**9:50-10:05AM**

**LPAC PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**



**MELANIE  
PATAPIS**  
CLIMATE ACTION  
MANAGER

Melanie Patapis is the Climate Action Manager in the Office of Sustainability at Swarthmore College. Melanie supports implementation, outreach and engagement of the College's energy plan, To Zero by Thirty-Five and leads data tracking initiatives for the office related to greenhouse gas emissions. She manages the Carbon Charge Program, including facilitation of the Carbon Charge Working Group, management of the Green Revolving Fund and carbon offsets procurement. Additionally, she supports and advises on a number of student projects through the President's Sustainability Research Fellowship, Sustainability Advocates program and office internships.

Clare Hyre is the Associate Director of Sustainability in the Office of Sustainability at Swarthmore College. At Swarthmore, Clare leads the implementation of Swarthmore's zero waste commitment and the College's commitment to sustainable food systems. She oversees the Green Advisor Program, Worthmore Free Store, the Food Recovery Fridge, and other zero waste programs and initiatives on campus. Clare is committed to creating collaborative and community-based sustainability solutions, she supports and advises on a number of student research projects through the President's Sustainability Research Fellowship and additional Office of Sustainability internship opportunities.



**CLARE HYRE**  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
OF SUSTAINABILITY

**SWARTHMORE**

# PLENARY

## From Cloud to Community Understanding Data Center Impacts



**10:05-10:40AM**  
**LPAC PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

Data centers are becoming a hot topic of conversation –but what are they, what’s inside them, and why is demand growing so quickly? This session will provide a clear, community-focused overview of how data centers operate and examine their local impacts. Presenters will also discuss state-level policy efforts, strategies to protect communities, and practical steps residents can take to stay informed and engaged.

**ANNEKE VAN ROSSUM**  
DELAWARE RIVERKEEPER NETWORK  
ADVOCACY & ADVANCEMENT  
COORDINATOR



**ROBERT ROUTH**  
NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE  
COUNCIL (NRDC)  
POLICY DIRECTOR, PENNSYLVANIA

# **PLENARY SPEAKER BIOS**

## **ANNEKE VAN ROSSUM**

**DELAWARE RIVERKEEPER NETWORK  
ADVOCACY & ADVANCEMENT COORDINATOR**

Anneke van Rossum joined the Delaware Riverkeeper Network in a full-time role in 2022, but her history with the organization is much longer. She first volunteered with the Delaware Riverkeeper Network at a young age when her passion and dedication to the environment first began to grow. She later interned for the organization, gaining awareness of all aspects of its work. In her current role, van Rossum serves in an advocacy capacity working on issues that range from protecting endangered species to opposing harmful development like data centers. She uses a combination of community organizing skills and knowledge of law and science to take on harms facing the Watershed and its communities. van Rossum received her Bachelor of Arts from Ithaca College where she majored in Politics, and minored in Environmental Studies. She received her law degree from Vermont Law School, where she focused her coursework on Environmental Law.

## **ROBERT ROUTH**

**NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL (NRDC)  
POLICY DIRECTOR, PENNSYLVANIA**

Robert Routh is an attorney and advocate working to advance decarbonization efforts in Pennsylvania across the power, transportation, industrial, and buildings sectors. His particular areas of focus include the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), oil and gas methane mitigation, and the equitable and efficient implementation of IRA/IIJA funds in-state. Prior to joining NRDC, Routh served as a policy and regulatory attorney for Clean Air Council, and he previously clerked for two federal judges of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Routh holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Pennsylvania and a JD from the University of Michigan Law School. He is based in the Washington, D.C., office.

# BREAKOUT SESSION #1



## The Case for Zero Waste

Rethinking Our System from Policy to Practice



**MIKE EWALL**

ENERGY JUSTICE  
NETWORK  
FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR



**SARAH ALESSIO  
SHEA**

PENNSYLVANIA  
RESOURCES COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**DANIELLE  
RUTHENBERG**

REMARK GLASS & BOTTLE  
UNDERGROUND  
CO-FOUNDER

**1:15-2:15PM & 2:30-3:30PM**  
**ROOM 199, SCIENCE CENTER**

**What would it take to truly move beyond disposal and build a circular system?**

This focused panel explores the policy, practical, and entrepreneurial pathways toward Zero Waste in Delaware County and our region. Mike Ewall of the Energy Justice Network will examine the impacts of incineration, introduce the Zero Waste Hierarchy, share insights from the County's life cycle analysis, and discuss Philadelphia's "Stop Trashing Our Air" Act. Sarah Alessio Shea of the Pennsylvania Resources Council will outline how to begin the Zero Waste journey through waste audits, source reduction strategies, and programs like the Traveling Glass Bin. Danielle Ruthenberg of Remark Glass and Bottle Underground will share how innovative glass reuse models demonstrate the power of circular business solutions. Join us to explore how policy, programs, and entrepreneurship can work together to create a smarter, healthier waste system.



**Delaware County**  
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# THE CASE FOR ZERO WASTE

## SPEAKER BIOS

### **MIKE EWALL**

**ENERGY JUSTICE NETWORK  
FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Mike Ewall is the Founder and Executive Director of the Philadelphia-based Energy Justice Network, a national nonprofit supporting communities to transition from polluting energy and waste facilities to clean energy and zero waste systems. In 1996, he co-founded the Campus Coalition Concerning Chester (C-4), bringing together fifteen colleges campuses in five states to support work against environmental racism in Chester. He helped residents form Delco Environmental Justice in 2007 which quickly stopped plans for the world's largest tires-to-oil refinery in Chester. In Philadelphia, he authored the Stop Trashing Our Air Act which is poised to stop the city from burning its trash in Chester. In our region and across the country, he has led winning campaigns stopping numerous incinerators, power plants, a multi-state nuclear waste dump, a coal-to-oil refinery, a liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal. He is the author of the Zero Waste Hierarchy that is now used as an international standard and as the guidepost for Delco's waste policy. He has authored local and state clean air laws that have tackled existing and proposed crematories and various waste incinerators in Pennsylvania and beyond. Learn more at [energyjustice.net](http://energyjustice.net) and [delcoej.org](http://delcoej.org).

### **SARAH ALESSIO SHEA**

**PENNSYLVANIA RESOURCES COUNCIL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

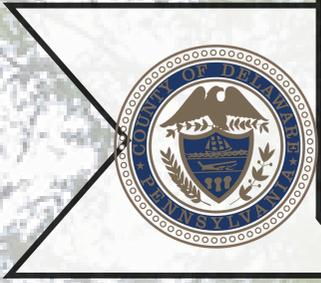
Sarah Alessio Shea is Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC), a statewide nonprofit organization that envisions a PA where nothing is wasted. Over her 20-year tenure at PRC, she has coordinated regional electronics recycling and household chemical collections, diverting 3.4 million pounds of material. She also led the development of PRC's Act 101 White Paper, published in 2021, advancing statewide recycling policy. In her role, Sarah oversees PRC's staff and programs across Pennsylvania, ensuring effective implementation of environmental initiatives. She currently serves on the boards of the Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania and the National Recycling Coalition.

### **DANIELLE RUTHENBERG**

**REMARK GLASS & BOTTLE  
UNDERGROUND  
CO-FOUNDER**

Danielle Ruttenberg is a trained glassblower, entrepreneur and mother of two young children. After graduating from Tyler School of Art (2006), she founded and operated DR Glass Design, a custom glass art and fabrication business from 2007 to 2015. Then, in early 2016, shortly after the birth of her first child, Danielle co-founded Remark Glass, a fully sustainable, low-waste custom glass studio located in the revitalized Bok Building in South Philadelphia. Combining art and sustainability, Remark Glass fulfills its mission of creating sustainable art and manufacturing practices by employing traditional glassblowing techniques to repurpose discarded bottle glass into small batch home accessories. Next, in 2020, Danielle and her team went on to form Bottle Underground, a 501(c)(3) organization committed to increasing their impact in waste reduction and generating jobs for the local community.

# BREAKOUT SESSION #2



## Community Projects Lightning Rounds



**ROOM 101, SCIENCE  
CENTER  
1:15-2:15PM &  
2:30-3:30PM**

Join us for electrifying lightning rounds designed to spark ideas, celebrate local wins, and keep Delaware County's sustainability momentum strong. This fast-paced session will spotlight practical, low-hanging-fruit projects that are already making a difference – and that you can easily bring to your own community or get involved with right away. Hear from Deb Soutar and Karen Murphy of Penn State Extension's Master Gardeners about their innovative plastic bag recycling initiative that transforms collected bags into durable park benches. Steve Jacobs, Parks and Recreation Director for Concord Township, will share how the engaging "Bio Blitz" event helps catalog local species while building community appreciation for biodiversity. Sarah Newman and Carol Armstrong, Master Watershed Stewards with Penn State Extension, will discuss winter road salt testing in partnership with the Stroud Water Research Center – why it matters, how it impacts waterways in Southeastern Pennsylvania, and what residents can do. Joy Baxter will highlight successful, repeatable programs led by the Haverford Township Environmental Advisory Council, and Woody Kotch of Transition Town Greater Media will introduce the Green Wagon Project, a hands-on effort supporting community planting initiatives.



**DEB SOUTAR & KAREN  
MURPHY**  
PENN STATE EXTENSION  
MASTER GARDENERS



**STEVE JACOBS**  
CONCORD TOWNSHIP  
PARKS & RECREATION



**SARAH NEWMAN &  
CAROL ARMSTRONG**  
PENN STATE  
EXTENSION MASTER  
WATERSHED STEWARDS



**JOY BAXTER**  
HAVERFORD  
TOWNSHIP  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ADVISORY COUNCIL



**WOODY KOTCH**  
TRANSITION TOWN  
GREATER MEDIA

# LIGHTNING ROUNDS

## SPEAKER BIOS

### **HEYWOOD (WOODY)**

**KOTCH** D.M.D., M.A.G.D.

TRANSITION TOWN GREATER MEDIA

Woody retired from his career in dentistry as a clinical professor and administrator from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine in 2020. In his retirement Woody has become a strong advocate for environmental issues including loss of Biodiversity and the effects of Global Warming. He is a member of the Media Borough Environmental Advisory Council, a Pennsylvania Master Naturalist, a Xerces Society Ambassador, a docent at Tyler Arboretum, and a Philadelphia Horticultural Society Tree Tender. Living in a Media Borough in a near zero CO2 emissions home, he has created a pollinator garden and habitat to share with the natural world. Woody's hope is to spread the word that we all need to contribute to saving the biosphere and ourselves.

### **DEB SOUTAR & KAREN MURPHY**

PENN STATE EXTENSION MASTER  
GARDENERS

Deb Soutar is a former health care executive, now retired and living in Wallingford. Since 2009, she has volunteered as an Arboretum Assistant at Scott Arboretum and Gardens and Master Gardener with the Penn State Extension Master Gardener program in Delaware County.

Karen Murphy was born, raised, and currently living in Delaware County. She retired as a Senior Director at GSK after 37 years. Karen became a Penn State Extension Master Gardener in Delaware County in 2003. She also nurtures her gardening interest through her part-time position at Terrain at Styers and volunteers at Longwood Gardens.

### **STEVE JACOBS** CONCORD TOWNSHIP PARKS & RECREATION

Steve Jacobs is the Parks & Recreation Director for Concord Township. He is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP), park champion and advocate for sustainable land management. A previous supervisor with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, Steve has over 10 years of experience organizing communities. He is a passionate, inclusive-minded, public servant who enjoys the work he does in the community. Recently, he took the steps to apply for and have Concord Township qualified as a Pennsylvania Bird Town. Additionally, in March, his department was awarded an "Excellence in Programming" honor at the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society's annual conference for their work with the Newlin Grist Mill on watershed education & preservation via the 'Race for the Watershed: 5K and Rubber Duck Regatta.' Currently, Steve's green-initiatives include a wildflower meadow conversion in a Township-owned open space, community tree plantings, and park clean-ups. Steve also sits on the 'Walk, Roll, Delco' Steering Committee.

# LIGHTNING ROUNDS

## SPEAKER BIOS

### **SARAH NEWMAN & CAROL ARMSTRONG**

**PENN STATE EXTENSION MASTER  
WATERSHED STEWARDS**

Sarah is the Watershed Conservation Assistant at Brandywine Red Clay Alliance. In her free time, she also serves a Penn State Master Watershed Steward in Chester County and an active member of her local Environmental Advisory Council. Her love of the environment began as a child in Western New York where she played in the woods, camped with her family, and splashed in puddles. She brings the same passion to her work today, where she champions environmental stewardship across the region.

Carol L. Armstrong Ph.D. is a neuroscientist and neuropsychologist with six years in brain injury rehabilitation and 35 years in research, healthcare, and teaching within the University of Pennsylvania Medical School and Cancer Center. Observing the impacts of loss of biodiversity, climate change, and chemicals in the environment, she shifted her focus to watershed protection and restoration, and to supporting scientists in their work on water quality, aquatic species, and freshwater ecosystems. She trained as a volunteer in riparian buffer restoration and stream water quality monitoring with the Stroud Water Research Center since 2017. When Dr. Armstrong found exposed salt piles and concentrated flow of salt to streams in 2019, her concern about the salinization of our freshwater streams and groundwater has grown to both taking actions through reporting to and educating municipalities and gathering data on the High-Quality Pickering Watershed in which she lives.

### **JOY BAXTER**

**HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL  
ADVISORY COUNCIL (EAC)**

Joy is a full-time volunteer implementing climate solutions in her Haverford Township community as chair of the Haverford Township EAC, local and wider Lutheran church, and the Clean Energy Co-op.

She grew up in Florida, earned degrees in Chemical Engineering and Violin Performance at Northwestern University, and went on to earn a Ph. D in Chemical Engineering at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). While there, Joy met her husband who does basic research on solar cells. Their home has had a solar installation for over ten years. During the pandemic, Joy became passionate about helping nonprofit organizations go solar. In addition, she loves to spend time with her family: playing games and traveling. She continues to play violin as concertmaster of the Lansdowne Symphony Orchestra.



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