



Alabama Rivers Alliance  
*Water Is Life*

**2017 Water Rally Conference**

**Speaker Biographies (by session)**

**FRIDAY MARCH 17<sup>th</sup>**

**Evening Keynote: Return of the Water Spirits**

**Dr. Bill Deutsch** grew up along the Genesee River and Lake Ontario in Western, New York, and worked as a biologist with environmental consulting companies on the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania for 11 years before moving to Alabama. He joined the Auburn University School of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Environments in 1985 and “retired” in 2013. Bill helped start the community-based volunteer water-monitoring program, Alabama Water Watch, and directed AWW for more than 20 years. He also started and directed the Global Water Watch program and has made about 100 trips to 25 countries to work on various water-related projects.

**SATURDAY MARCH 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Saturday Morning Plenary – Stronger Together**

**Mitch Reid** has been the program director for the Alabama Rivers Alliance since 2009. He hails from Bellwood, Alabama, a small town in Southeast Alabama right on the Choctawhatchee River in Geneva County. He is a graduate of Slocomb High School in Slocomb, Alabama and then went on to pursue his undergraduate degree at West Point and his Law Degree at the University of Alabama. After West Point, Mitch served in the Army until 2004. He was stationed for most of his military career in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, serving with the 82nd Airborne Division and the 16th Military Police Brigade. During this time, he was deployed to Afghanistan from August of 2002 until March of 2003. While at the Alabama Rivers Alliance, Mitch has been instrumental in working with both the State and Federal Government towards real and lasting protections of our rivers.

**April Ingle** splits her time as a Science and Policy Associate for River Network and Owner of April Ingle Consulting. At River Network she supports projects to empower the community of 2,000+ river and watershed organizations in the US with resources and support for their work to protect and restore rivers. As owner of April Ingle Consulting she works to boost the impact of organizations that are working for a better world. She provides organizations with tools, training and strategies to boost their fundraising, strategic and program planning, board development and engagement, collaborations, communications, staffing, management, and events. Previously, April served as Executive Director of Georgia River Network; as Public Relations Specialist, then Executive Director of the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts; as Coordinator of the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative; and as an environmental educator.

**Cindy Lowry** is the Executive Director of the Alabama Rivers Alliance. A native of Alabama, Cindy was born and raised in Oneonta, Alabama. She received her B.S. in Wildlife in Science from Auburn University and her Masters of Public Administration from UAB. The focus of her masters’ thesis was citizen participation in public policy. Cindy has over 15 years of work experience in the conservation nonprofit sector. She joined the staff of the Alabama Rivers Alliance in 2005 and became the Executive Director in 2007. In 2016 she was named one of the 30 “Women Shaping the State” by Al.com. Cindy

also currently serves as President of the Board of Directors for Alabama Arise and is a long-time member of the Board of Friends of the Locust Fork River.

### **Saturday Lunch Keynote - When the Levee Breaks**

**Katherine Baer** is the Director of Science and Policy at River Network. As an environmental advocate for over 15 years, Katherine has worked for River Network, American Rivers, Triangle Land Conservancy, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, the Center for Progressive Reform, and the School for Field Studies. In that work she has led efforts to improve policies for clean and reliable water at the local, state and national levels, including testifying before Congressional Committees and serving on state and national working groups on topics including drought management, climate change adaptation and reducing sewer overflows. While at American Rivers, Katherine led a team of policy and technical experts working to advance green infrastructure through successful advocacy for increased funding and stronger permits and policies, working with a diverse array of partners. In her current position as Director of Science and Policy for River Network, Katherine leads efforts to build the capacity of watershed groups nationwide in the areas of clean and ample water. She currently serves on the Water Environment Federation's Stormwater Institute Advisory Committee.

**April Ingle** and **Mitch Reid** – see above

### **Saturday Breakout Session I**

#### **Sewage in Alabama**

**Catherine Coleman Flowers** is the Director of Environmental Justice and Civic Engagement of the Center for Earth Ethics at Union Theological Seminary. She is the founder of the Alabama Center for Rural Enterprise Community Development Corporation (ACRE) which seeks to address the root causes of poverty by seeking sustainable solutions. She also serves as the Rural Development Manager for the Equal Justice Initiative serving the citizens of Lowndes County, one of the 10 poorest counties in Alabama's Black Belt. Ms. Flowers has been able to bring significant resources to address its many environmental and social injustices. Specifically, her work at ACRE addresses the lack of sewage disposal infrastructure in Alabama's rural Black Belt, the legacy of racism and neglect stretching back to the time of slavery. Ms. Flowers is also an internationally recognized advocate for the human right to water and sanitation and works to make the UN Sustainable Development Agenda accountable to front-line communities.

**Nelson Brooke**, a Birmingham native, has an anthropology degree from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Nelson is an Eagle Scout and outdoor enthusiast who has enjoyed fishing and hunting along the Black Warrior River since he was seven years old. Nelson has been Black Warrior Riverkeeper's staff Riverkeeper since January of 2004. As Riverkeeper, Nelson patrols and photographs the Black Warrior River and its tributaries from the land, water, and air, looks for pollution problems, responds to citizen complaints, researches and analyzes polluters' permits, collects pollution samples for laboratory analysis, educates the public about the beauty of the river and threats to it, works to empower stakeholders throughout the watershed, advocates compliance with environmental laws, works on finding solutions to pollution problems, and is a spokesman for the Black Warrior River watershed. Nelson was named "2010 Alabama River Hero" by the Alabama Rivers Alliance.

#### **Moving Alabama to a Clean Energy Future**

**Haley Colson Lewis** is a native of Birmingham, Haley earned her B.A. from George Washington University, J.D. from Cumberland School of Law and a master's in Public Administration from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Haley focused her studies at Cumberland on a career in public

policy and expanded that focus by obtaining an MPA. Haley began working on statewide policy issues in 2013. Haley is an active member of the Birmingham community. She is a member of the Junior League of Birmingham, League of Women Voters and the Community Affairs Committee. Haley is an advocate for comprehensive, long-term policies that promote health and equality in Alabama.

### **Endangered Species**

**Elise Bennett** is a staff attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity who focuses on protecting rare amphibians and reptiles and their habitats. A lifelong Floridian, she holds a law degree and a certificate of concentration in environmental law from Stetson University College of Law and a bachelor's degree in environmental science and policy from the University of South Florida, where she graduated from the Honors College. Before joining the Center, Elise served as a judicial staff attorney in the 13th Judicial Circuit in Hillsborough County, Florida, and worked pro bono to preserve exceptional habitat in the southeastern United States.

### **Avoiding A Communication Breakdown**

**Kyle Crider** is Energy Program Manager for the Alabama Environmental Council and the Alabama Solar Knowledge project. Kyle holds a bachelors in Environmental Studies and a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree with a double-emphasis in Urban Planning & Policy Analysis. He is a former GIS Tech with Jefferson County Storm Water Management Authority (SWMA) and a recovering former Microsoft Certified Professional Solutions Developer (MCSD).

## **Saturday Breakout Sessions II**

### **Defending Rivers 101** – Cindy Lowry (see above)

### **Put this in your Pipeline**

**Raleigh Hoke**, who is currently Gulf Restoration Network's Campaign Director, has spent the last 10 years working on environmental advocacy campaigns in the Gulf south, including extensive work to hold BP accountable in the wake of the BP drilling disaster, and successful organizing efforts in coastal Mississippi to prevent oil and gas drilling in state waters and protect the Pascagoula River. Raleigh completed Harvard Kennedy School's Leadership, Organizing and Action program, and has attended numerous trainings focused on both online and traditional campaigning, including the Salsa Labs Community Conference and Midwest Academy's Supervising Organizers Workshop. He has a B.A. in Political Science from Tulane University.

### **Instream Flow**

**Taconya D. Goar** is the Environmental Affairs Supervisor for the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR). She conducts environmental reviews of proposed projects throughout the state, and evaluates them for their potential to negatively impact state-threatened and protected species. She collaborates and partners with state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector entities on restoration, and mitigation projects. She is also an agency representative to the Alabama Water Agency Working Group (AWAWG), and has contributed to the Instream Flow Panel. She received her PhD in Fisheries Management from Auburn University, and BS and MS degrees in Environmental Science from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Originally from Washington, DC, she and her husband Aaron and son Kenneth have found a "Sweet Home" in Alabama.

### **Harnessing the Power of Volunteers and Interns**

**Justinn Overton** has a deep family connection to the Coosa Valley and has always loved playing outside as much as possible. She's proud to work to restore and protect the Coosa- it's been a constant part of her life! Growing up in the Coosa Valley, Justinn spent time fishing and exploring the banks of the river with

her parents. Years later, she got married at Alabama 4-H Center on Lay Lake. As the Executive Director, she ensures Coosa Riverkeeper has the resources needed to fight for swimmable, drinkable, and fishable water. She also coordinates many other aspects of our organization such as membership, capacity building, special events, and outreach. In 2015, Justinn was one of four women highlighted by Southern Living as “Women of Worth,” a short list of women who are dedicated to improving the lives of Southerners in need. Before joining the staff of Coosa Riverkeeper, she worked with the Alabama Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council implementing the Building Green Jobs for Alabama program, a statewide federally funded workforce development grant. During her time at USGBC Alabama, she trained 300+ Alabamians about green building principles and sustainability.

### **Saturday Night Keynotes**

**Brad McLane** founded and served as the first Executive Director of the Alabama Rivers Alliance. Currently he is Chief of Administration at NaphCare, a Birmingham-based governmental contractor providing correctional healthcare services to local, state and federal clients. Brad is in his third month in this position. Previously, Brad worked as a Senior Attorney for the Southern Environmental Law Center in Charlottesville Virginia, and as a Trial Attorney for the Environmental Enforcement Section of the United States Department of Justice in Washington DC. Brad received his J.D. from the Georgetown University Law Center in 2006 and graduated with a B.S. in Natural Resources from Sewanee (The University of the South) in 1994.

**Adam Snyder** is the Conservation Campaigns Manager for the Global Conservation Campaigns Team at The Nature Conservancy. The Global Conservation Campaigns team conducts political and public advocacy campaigns to generate funding and policy outcomes that conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Adam oversees all public funding efforts of the team, which has helped generate more than \$90 billion for conservation over the past 30 years. Adam has served on the political front lines for conservation at the local, state, and national levels. As executive director of Conservation Alabama, Adam spearheaded the grassroots effort of the larger campaign to renew the Forever Wild Land Trust, which passed with an impressive 75 percent of the vote. Prior to Conservation Alabama, Adam served as executive director of the Alabama Rivers Alliance.

### **SUNDAY MARCH 19<sup>th</sup>**

Planned and moderated by ARA Junior Board Members – Sabrina Zizo, Dawn Coleman, Laura Quattrochi, Charles Miller, Matthew Grcic, Zac Napier and La’Tanya Scott. Learn about them at <http://alabamarivers.org/junior-board/>

### **Sunday Morning Emerging Leaders Panel**

**Cade Kistler** grew up on Guntersville Lake in north Alabama. After earning his B.S. from Auburn University he took a position with the U.S. Forest Service as a wilderness restoration intern in Washington; however, sweet home Alabama called and Cade returned home. After getting married he followed his wife to her home in Baldwin County and has been exploring the treasures of the Gulf coast since. In his spare time Cade likes to kayak and bike with his wife and snow ski whenever he can. Cade is thrilled to have the opportunity to work for the citizens of the Alabama Gulf coast and preserve the environment of this majestic area. As Program Director, Cade works to make sure that projects Mobile Baykeeper engages in fit the vision and strategic plan of the organization. He is responsible for determining how and when to engage in policy matters to ensure responsible growth throughout the area. Cade manages Mobile Baykeeper's activities in protecting our waterways and communities from pollution resulting from infrastructure issues such as sewage overflows, construction stormwater, and industrial pollution. With assistance from the Program Coordinator and Education and Outreach Coordinator and guidance of the Executive Director and Board of Directors he designs and implements new programs to educate and engage citizens on environmental issues. He also oversees work related to citizen concerns on environmental issues.

**Yael Girard** is the Executive Director of Weeks Bay Foundation. She moved to Alabama from Asheville, North Carolina. There, she worked for the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy and also for the Western North Carolina Alliance. Yael graduated from Warren Wilson College in 2006. She loves to hike, swim and explore the outdoors. She came to the Foundation as an AmeriCorps Associate and then moved up to Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator. Yael considers the role of E.D. as a new opportunity to learn from the challenges of leading a nonprofit and reach more people within the community. She believes partnerships are the best way to improve an entire region.

**Kim Hall** is the Director of Cahaba Environmental Center at Living River, located in Montevallo, Alabama. Born and raised in Kentucky, she spent her childhood splashing in the neighborhood creek and often returned home caked in mud. Through her early years, she found her passion for education and set out to build on that skill set. Kim attended Centre College in Danville, Kentucky where she stumbled upon the world of environmental education as she worked with a local nonprofit focused on protecting Clark's Run watershed. Following graduation, Kim headed to the Southwest and spent a year in New Mexico working for Americorps. Then, Kim headed for McDowell Environmental Center where she immediately fell in love with residential environmental education and the woodlands of northwest Alabama. Kim joined the Peace Corps in 2010 and served as an Environmental Education Extension Agent. Working in a small village in Senegal, West Africa provided her with a global perspective to nature education. She received her M. Ed. in Environmental Education through Western Washington, as well as Nonprofit Management and Leadership and North Naturalist Certification through the North Cascades Institute. Post graduate school, Kim worked as a Program Coordinator and Summer Camp Director at Primitive Pursuits, a primitive skill-based non-profit through Cornell University. Kim has worked at the Cahaba Environmental Center for 2.5 years, developing a residential environmental education aimed at educating school children about the Cahaba River Watershed.

**Jonathon Meeks** studied in the New College Program at the University of Alabama. He has been a professional horticulturist at a local garden center since 2012. Jonathon has been a member of the Coosa Valley Group of the Sierra Club since 2011 has been on the Executive Committee of that group since 2012. Jonathon has been a member of the Alabama Chapter executive committee since 2012 and was elected Chair of the Alabama , Chapter in January of 2017. Jonathon lives on a farm on Sand Mountain in the Coosa watershed where he enjoys organic gardening, myciculture, and four pet miniature donkeys. Jonathon is also an avid kayaker and has floated creeks and rivers all over the state.

**Zac Napier** is an environmental educator at Turkey Creek Nature Preserve. He was born and raised in rural Birmingham, just a rock's throw away from the banks of Bayview Lake. He grew up catching anoles and salamanders on 10 acres of Alabama woodlands. From a young age he participated and excelled in community sports like baseball and football. Having the opportunity to play in three football state championships and winning two he considers himself a very blessed individual. He attended Birmingham-Southern College where he played football for Joey Jones, as a part of their first football program since 1939. Through the biological sciences major, he built a major around his passions of conservation, ecology, herpetology, botany and zoology. Zac's whole life was changed by a couple professors, and a 6 week research trip at La Selva biological station in Costa Rica. This ultimately led him away from the medical field where those influential professors got him a job as a field technician at The Freshwater Land Trust. Over two years of time, he moved up to become Land Steward over 5,000 acres of conservation land. There he broadened his knowledge of Alabama's rich and wondrous biodiversity through personal exploration. With the lofty goal of becoming a naturalist, Zac decided to continue polishing his skill set and take up the mantle of an environmental educator. He has always enjoyed interacting with the young individuals and is excited to have the opportunity to inspire young minds that will shape our future.

**La'Tanya Scott** is an Environmental Science educator for the Cahaba River Society. She graduated from Southwest Atlanta Christian Academy high school in 2008 and found her way to Alabama by attending Miles College. She was the first in her family to not only attend college — but to graduate as well. In 2014, she received her bachelor's degree in environmental science. She has an outstanding passion for nature and the outdoors. She loves being on the river, working with children of all ages, volunteering, playing with her dog and traveling. In her third year with CRS, La'Tonya's focus is to get more urban city schools, community programs and youth to participate in the Shane Hulsey CLEAN program to help build a better connection between humans and our drinking water/watersheds