



Speaker Biographies

Fred Bonner, P. Geo., FGC

Professional Geoscientist

Fred has a Bachelor of Science in Geology and Master's Degrees in Hydrogeology and Planning. He is a Professional Geologist and Fellow of Geoscientists Canada. Fred has 40 years' experience, scattered across government, industry, and consulting. His main interest is the application of earth and water science information in community planning, economic development and protection of people and the environment.

Fred is a co-founder, past-president, and current PT Executive Director of the charity - the Rural Water Watch Association, whose mission is to help rural residents in vulnerable and marginalized communities test, protect and conserve their well water supplies.

Todd Burgess

Executive Director, Forest Nova Scotia

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Todd graduated in 1990 with a Bachelor of Science in Forestry from UNB. He headed to British Columbia where he worked for 17 years as a professional forester with the BC Timber Sales Program. Todd returned to Nova Scotia in 2007 to work for Northern Pulp in their stumpage procurement program until the recent mill closure. Since 2020, Todd has been working with Forest Nova Scotia and now leads the organization as the Executive Director.

Todd lives in Hilden, Colchester County, with his wife Janice who is an elementary school teacher. They have 2 grown children. Todd spends his spare time curling in the winter and keeping bees in the summer.

Ken Cox

Wildfire Prevention Officer, NS Department of Natural Resources

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Ken is a graduate of the Maritime Forest Ranger School, now called the Maritime College of Forest Technology. He worked with NSDNR in the inventory and silviculture division after graduating. In 1998, he had the opportunity to head west to Alberta where he had a 22-year career with the Alberta Government in Wildfire Management, which allowed him to work in both operational and prevention aspects of Wildfire. He returned home to Nova Scotia in 2020 and took his current position as Wildfire Prevention Officer in August 2024. In this role, he also has the designation of the FireSmart provincial Liaison, working with FireSmart Canada to promote and implement the program in Nova Scotia.

Scott Maston, RPF

Association for Sustainable Forestry

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Scott is a native Nova Scotian, and after finishing high school in Amherst, he attended University of New Brunswick to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Forestry in 1987. After finishing university, Scott started work in the Group Venture system with West Pictou Forest Owners. In 1987, he co-founded Century Forestry Consultants Ltd., and remained in that business until 2021 when he joined the Forestry Division at the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources in Truro. In December 2024, he retired from DNR and assumed a role with the Association for Sustainable Forestry, focusing on development and implementation of its auditing and monitoring program, along with professional training, and helping with other ASF programs and projects.

Outside of work, Scott enjoys hunting, fishing, DIY projects, and time at his (or others') camp. He currently lives in Pictou with wife JoAnne, and children Alexandra and Iain.

Caitlin McCavour

PhD student, Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture

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Caitlin McCavour is a PhD student in Soil Science at the Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture. She completed her undergraduate degree in Environmental Science at Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture, followed by a Master's at Dalhousie University, where she studied the response of soil and plant tissue to liming in two acidified forest stands in Nova Scotia. Caitlin spent three years as a provincial soil specialist in agriculture, conducting extension work and contributing to federal and provincial research programs. In addition to her experience in agriculture and forestry, she has also worked in wetland restoration. Passionate about the intersection of soil science and land management, she is now developing a forest soil health and extension framework for Nova Scotia's private woodlot owners.

Jamie Ring

Forest Modelling Specialist, NS Dept. of Natural Resources

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Jamie is a Forest Modelling Specialist with the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources. His work focuses on strategic forest management planning, growth and yield modelling, and incorporating ecosystems research into forest management planning. He also conducts research on the application of drones in forest management. Jamie has a Forest Technology/Advanced Fish & Wildlife Techniques Diploma from the Maritime College of Forest Technology, a BSc in Forestry from the University of New Brunswick, and is currently working on an MSc in Forestry at the University of British Columbia.

Mary Jane Rodger, MFC, RPF

Executive Director, Nova Scotia Working Woodlands Trust
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Mary Jane has lived and worked in Kespukwitk since 2015. Following the completion of a Master's in Forest Conservation, MJ began working with the Medway Community Forest Co-op, where she has remained since, minus a small term with the federal government in 2022-2023. Along with the MCFC, MJ also leads the Nova Scotia Working Woodlands Trust, managing innovative projects to steward and restore Wabanaki forests on both Crown and private lands. Mary Jane has been involved with many facets of Nova Scotia's shift to ecological forestry, playing an influential role in the Lahey Forest Practices Review, and has served on the Department of Natural Resources Minister's Advisory Committee.

Glen Rosse

2025 Western Woodland Owner of the Year

Glen Rosse of Dartmouth received the 2025 Woodland Owner of the Year Award for Western Nova Scotia. Glen has approximately 250 acres of woodlands in Kings and Annapolis counties under management with the Western Woodlot Services Cooperative. Glen acquired his first woodlot in the early 1980's and has undertaken various forest management activities over the years. These include planting, pre-commercial thinning, harvesting, road construction and boundary line maintenance. Glen's father, mother, brother Raymond and spouse Judy all contributed greatly to help Glen manage his woodlands.

In the summer of 2024 Glen had a harvest operation undertaken on his South Scots Bay property. He was engaged in planning the harvest and met with WWSC staff on site on a number of occasions to discuss various operational planning considerations. The prescription for the South Scots Bay harvest employed various partial harvesting techniques such as strip cuts and patch cuts. The overall objectives were to maintain and enhance his property using sustainable forest management techniques that consider the long term health, diversity and ecological values of the woodlot. This approach has many advantages over clear cutting. Glen's vision is to develop a thriving forest that will provide economic, environmental and social benefits for future generations.

Brian Thomas

Owner-Operator, North Range Forest Products

Brian Thomas is the owner-operator of North Range Forest Products and a graduate of the Maritime Forest Ranger School. With 35 years of experience managing private woodland, he brings practical, field-based knowledge of sustainable forest stewardship. As both a contractor and a private woodlot owner himself, Brian understands the balance between productivity and long-term forest health. Through his work, he strives to maintain healthy, diverse forests while supporting responsible management practices on privately owned land.

Sarah Vascotto

Provincial Regulatory Affairs Biologist, NS Dept. of Natural Resources

Sarah has over 25 years of wildlife experience on a diverse range of species including moose, muskox, coyotes, caribou, amphibians and fish and has worked in government, private consulting, not-for-profit and First Nations agencies across Canada. She gained 6 years of forest management planning experience as a biologist with the Ministry of Natural Resources in Chapleau, Ontario before moving to Clementsvale, Nova Scotia in 2013.

Sarah joined the Department of Natural Resources in 2024 as a Stewardship Biologist for the western part of the province where one of her main projects focused on wildfire and wildlife interactions as well as post-fire monitoring in the 2023 Barrington Fire footprint. Although her roles with DNR shifted in the fall of 2025, she still maintains an avid interest in aspects that explore interactions between fire, habitat and wildlife.

Sherilyn Young

Consultation Project Support Officer Coordinator, Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn

Dr. Rim Zayed, M.B.B.Ch, DPH, PhD (Epi), FRCPC, DABPM, ACPM

Regional Medical Officer of Health, Public Health, Western Zone
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Dr. Rim (Reem) Zayed is the Regional Medical Officer of Health for Nova Scotia's Western Zone. She is a Royal College and American Board-certified public health physician who works closely with communities across the province. Her focus is on practical, real-world health, translating evidence into practice helping people who live and work outdoors understand and reduce risks like Lyme disease, so they can stay safe while doing the work they love.