AGWT 2024 Texas Groundwater Conference Presenter Bios
June 11-12, 2024

Natalie Ballew, PG, Groundwater Division Director, Water Science & Conservation Office, Texas Water Development Board, Austin, TX
Natalie Ballew is the Division Director of Water Science and Conservation at the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), which provides technical information and support to public clients regarding groundwater resources and statewide water planning. She previously worked as a hydrogeologist on both the Groundwater Technical Assistance and Groundwater Modeling teams at the TWDB and spent some time at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality working on U.S.-Mexico water issues. Natalie is a licensed Texas professional geoscientist, has a Bachelor of Science degree in Geological Sciences from the University of Southern California, and has Master's degrees in Energy and Earth Resources and Public Affairs from the University of Texas at Austin.

Marty Jones, Attorney, Sprouse Shrader Smith PLLC, Amarillo, TX
Marvin (Marty) W. Jones is an attorney with Sprouse Shrader Smith PLLC in Amarillo, Texas.
He graduated from Baylor University School of Law with honors in 1977. He is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, and has been Board Certified in Civil Trial Law by Texas Board of Legal Specialization since 1986. His practice includes litigation in a wide range of substantive areas, including personal injury, wrongful death, products liability, oil and gas, takings claims, and groundwater law. Over the past 46 years, he has tried over 100 jury cases to verdict. Marty has extensive experience in groundwater issues, beginning in 2004 with the representation of Quixx Corporation, the owner of 100,000 acres of groundwater rights in the Texas Panhandle. He is a frequent speaker and author on groundwater ownership, permitting and related subjects.

Brantley Jones, Attorney, Sprouse Shrader Smith PLLC, Amarillo, TX
Brantley Jones is a partner at Sprouse Shrader Smith PLLC. His work includes pre-trial, trial and appellate work in a wide variety of contexts including commercial disputes, oil & gas litigation, water law, employment matters, real property disputes, and personal injury cases. In recent years, he has gravitated increasingly toward water issues. Mr. Jones presented oral argument on behalf of appellants in Coyote Lake Ranch v. City of Lubbock before the Amarillo Court of Appeals, and argued on behalf of appellants in Stratta v. Roe before the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. In July 2016, he was invited to provide testimony for the Texas Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water & Rural Affairs regarding the application of oil and gas law to groundwater.

Steven Young, PhD, PE, PG, Principal Hydrogeologist, INTERA Inc., Austin, TX
Steve Young is a Principal Geoscientist with INTERA Inc in Austin Texas. He has advanced degrees from Stanford University and the University of Waterloo and an undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia. Steve's expertise includes the characterizing of aquifers through the analysis of geophysical logs, aquifer test data, and geochemical data modeling of groundwater flow through the application of analytical and numerical models. He also has considerable experience with the the Gulf Coast Aquifer System, the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer, and the Northern Trinity the Northern Trinity Aquifer. Dr. Young is a Profession Engineer and Profession Geoscientist. Steve is also a board member for the Texas Desalination Association and a member of the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation Water Well Drillers Advisory Council.

Amanda Long, Research Associate, WestWater Research
Amanda Long is a Research Associate at WestWater Research. Her work focuses on economics and valuation analysis, water rights transactions research, market analysis, policy analysis, econometric and financial modeling, and water supply assessments. Amanda was previously employed by the Arizona Department of Water Resources. There, she assisted with the development of the 4th and 5th Management Plans, which contain the regulatory conservation programs for groundwater, and the method to assess the management goal in Arizona's Active Management Areas. She also led the team responsible for the development of water supply and demand assessments for each of Arizona's groundwater basins. Amanda has also previously worked on decision making tools, assisting users in understanding the social and environmental impacts to project implementation. Amanda holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in Environmental Science and Agricultural & Resource Economics from the University of Alberta.

Harry Seely, Principal/Water Resource Economist, WestWater Research
Mr. Seely has 25 years of experience in agricultural and water resource economic analysis. He holds a M.S. in natural resource and agricultural economics from Oregon State University and a B.S. in economics from Pacific Lutheran University. Over the last decade, he has applied mathematical programming and econometric analysis techniques to estimate the value of water. In addition, he has developed a variety of economic models as part of interdisciplinary teams to assess the regional economic costs and benefits of water quality, development and reallocation projects throughout the West. Recently, he developed and utilized market information, simulation models, and econometric techniques to estimate the market value of water for federal and state agencies, nonprofits, and private industry in support of water project development and reallocation activities. Currently, he is developing and utilizing market information, simulation models, and econometric techniques to estimate the economic value of water for federal surface water storage feasibility studies in California. He has conducted market and financial analyses of proposed private water development projects in the southwest as well as numerous water right appraisals in support of water acquisitions for urban and instream flow purposes.

Kyle Garmany, Water & Agriculture Program Director, The Nature Conservancy, San Antonio, TX
Kyle Garmany, Water and Agriculture Program Director for The Nature Conservancy-Texas, is responsible for advancing conservation strategies to protect working lands and the ecological integrity of Texas' rivers, bays, and estuaries. His work includes the development of partnerships with agricultural producers designed to improve drought resilience while meeting environmental water demands. Prior to his tenure with TNC, Kyle worked as a hydrologist for the state of Texas primarily focusing on instream flows science, water policy and implementation of environmental water transactions. Kyle studied Hydrology at Humboldt State University, and Water Resources at Texas State University.

Gary Westbrook, General Manager, Post Oak Savannah Groundwater Conservation District, Milano, TX
Gary began work for the District in June of 2003 as General Manager. He served as President of the Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts from 2005-2007 and serves as the District's voting representative to Groundwater Management Area 8, as well as the voting representative for Groundwater Management Area 12 on the Brazos G Regional Water Planning Group. Gary has served as the General Manager of Post Oak Savannah GCD (POSGCD) since June 2003, and is a past President of Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts (TAGD). Currently, he serves POSGCD as voting representative on Groundwater Management Area (GMA) 12 and GMA 8 and serves as voting representative for GMA 12 on the Brazos G Regional Water Planning Group. He was elected to the Texas Water Conservation Association Board of Directors in 2018 and has been active in legislative committees of both TAGD and TWCA, serving as Chair and Co-Chair of various committees. He has provided testimony before committees of both the Texas House and Senate on groundwater issues and the creation and implementation of legislation affecting groundwater management of GCDs. Gary received a BS in Agriculture Education from Sam Houston State University.

Marc Friberg, Deputy General Manager, Edwards Aquifer Authority, San Antonio, TX
Marc Friberg is the Deputy General Manager of the Edwards Aquifer Authority. In his role, he provides executive leadership in the mission and policy direction of the organization. In addition, Marc currently manages the EAA's permitting, conservation, regulatory and legislative programs while providing support to activities related to the Edward Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan. Marc is a graduate of Baylor University and the Baylor University School of Law.

Brooke Paup, Chairwoman, Texas Water Development Board, Austin, TX
Brooke Paup has served as a Board member of the Texas Water Development Board since February 22, 2018. Governor Greg Abbott designated her as Chairwoman on April 22, 2021. Prior to her appointment to the Board, Paup served as the director of legislative affairs for the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts for the previous three years. While there, she led a team of legislative professionals to address statutory tax reforms. Paup is formerly the deputy division chief of intergovernmental relations and former special assistant for policy and research for the Office of the Attorney General, where she worked on legislative issues, special litigation, and public finance-notably House Bill 4 and Senate Joint Resolution 1 in the 83rd Legislative Session, which created the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT) and the State Water Implementation Revenue Fund for Texas (SWIRFT). Paup has 18 years of state government experience.
In September 2022, Governor Abbott appointed her to the Environmental Flows Advisory Group. She is also a member of the State Bar of Texas and Symphony League and a board member of the Wine and Food Foundation of Texas Auction Committee. Paup earned a bachelor of arts from Texas A&M University and a juris doctor from Texas Tech School of Law.

Azzah AlKurdi, Engineering Specialist, Innovative Water Technologies, Water Science & Conservation, Texas Water Development Board, Austin, TX
Azzah AlKurdi is an engineering specialist in the Innovative Water Technologies department at the Texas Water Development Board since 2019, focusing on Aquifer Storage and Recovery. Azzah received a Bachelor of Science from the University of Khartoum, Sudan, a Master of Science from Colorado State University, both in Civil Engineering, and a Master of Water Management from Texas A&M University.

John Jansen, PG, PGp, PhD, Senior Geophysicist & Hydrogeologist, Collier Geophysics, Lakewood, CO
John has a B.S. in Geology and a M.S. and Ph.D. in Geological Sciences with an emphasis in hydrogeology and geophysics, all from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is a Senior Geophysicist and Hydrogeologist for Collier Consulting. John works on a wide variety of ground water projects around the country specializing in high-capacity wells and groundwater resource management. He received the NGWA Keith A Anderson Award in 2012 for service to NGWA and the groundwater industry and was the NGWA McEllhiney Distinguished Lecturer in Water Well Technology in 2013. John was an invited lecturer on managed aquifer recharge and groundwater geophysics for the Geoscience University of China in Beijing in June of 2018.

Patricia Bobeck, PhD, PG, Hydrogeologist, Translator, Author
After an early career linguistics, Patricia enrolled in the University of Texas geology department where she completed a master's degree in 1985. Her thesis is a study of Nine Point Mesa, Brewster County Texas. On the basis of one hydrogeology course, she found a challenging job as industrial and hazardous waste regulator for the State of Texas. She later worked for the state as Chief of the Geological Assessment Program of the Radiation Safety Licensing Branch. During these years, she found time to translate Henry Darcy's Public Fountains of the City of Dijon into English. After her retirement from state service, she poured her energy into a doctorate in hydrogeology at University of Texas. Her dissertation is an examination of the contributions of Abbé Paramelle, contemporary of Darcy, a self-taught hydrogeologist who found water in 10,000 places in France in the mid-19th century.

Robert Mace, PhD, PG, Executive Director and Chief Water Policy Officer, Meadows Center, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX
Dr. Mace has over 30 years of experience in hydrology, hydrogeology, stakeholder processes, and water policy. Before joining Texas State University in 2017, Robert worked at the Texas Water Development Board for 17 years ending his career there as the Deputy Executive Administrator for the Water Science & Conservation office. While at the Board, Robert worked on understanding groundwater and surface water resources in Texas; advancing water conservation and innovative water technologies such as desalination, aquifer storage and recovery, reuse, and rainwater harvesting; and protecting Texans from floods. Prior to joining the Texas Water Development Board, Robert worked nine years at the Bureau of Economic Geology at The University of Texas at Austin as a hydrologist and research scientist. Robert has a B.S. in Geophysics and an M.S. in Hydrology from the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology and a Ph.D. in Hydrogeology from The University of Texas at Austin.

Jeremy Kuhn, Director-North America, Roscoe Moss Company, Phoenix, AZ
Jeremy Kuhn has been involved in the Groundwater Industry for over 20 years. Jeremy started his career as a Drillers Helper and has since held positions as a Driller, Operations Manager, Contracts Manager, and Business Development. He is currently the Director of North America at Roscoe Moss Company. In addition to serving on the Board of Directors for the American Ground Water Trust, he also serves on the boards of the National Groundwater Association, Arizona Water Well Association, and the Mountain States Groundwater Association.

Cody Cannon, PG, Hydrogeologist, Geosyntec Consultants, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA
Mr. Cannon earned his B.S. in Geology from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and his M.S. in Hydrogeology from the University of Idaho. He holds Professional Geologist licenses in LA, NC, and SC. He has ten years of experience working as a hydrogeologist in both an environmental consulting and state regulatory capacity on projects throughout the southeast and western U.S. He joined Geosyntec Consultants, Inc. in Tampa, FL and later Charlotte, NC where he garnered experience in the site assessment/remediation and groundwater supply disciplines. His work included hydrogeologic site characterization, aquifer performance testing, well design and monitoring, and sustainability/compliance reporting for municipal and industrial clients. He also worked on projects assessing and remediating environmental impacts from chemical constituents including metals, chlorinated solvents, petroleum hydrocarbons, and pesticides in soil, groundwater, and soil vapor for clients across many different business sectors. He served as project manager with the NC Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) Brownfields Program assessing environmental risks and working with landowners and developers towards the redevelopment of impacted properties in a manner protective of the end user and the environment. Following NCDEQ, he gained valuable business development and operations management experience working for a NC based startup focusing on cost beneficial soil reuse solutions for landowners, developers, and contractors. Mr. Cannon returned to consulting in his native Baton Rouge, LA in 2022.

Andrew Worsley, PG, Wet Rock Groundwater Services, LLC, Austin, TX
Andrew Worsley is a senior staff hydrogeologist at Wet Rock Groundwater Services in Austin, Texas. He has been with Wet Rock since 2014 and earned his Texas P.G. license in 2021. His specialties include well design, construction, rehabilitation, aquifer testing, groundwater modeling, resource evaluation, and permitting. Prior to working at Wet Rock, Andrew worked as a technical intern at the Southern Trinity Groundwater Conservation District in McLennan County during his graduate studies at Baylor University.

Lou Portillo, PE, Water/Wastewater Section Lead HDR, Austin, TX
Lou Portillo serves as the water/wastewater section lead for the HDR San Antonio office. He graduated from Texas Tech University with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. He has over 15 years of experience working on large booster pump stations, pipeline transmission mains, sanitary sewer mains, lift stations, groundwater wells, and aquifer storage and recovery facilities. Lou has been an active member with the American Water Works Association South Texas Chapter, serving as the Secretary and President. Lou is now the Deputy Trustee for the South Texas Chapter of AWWA.

Clara Smith-Salgado, Hydrogeologist, HDR, Austin, TX
Clara Smith-Salgado is a hydrogeologist at HDR Engineering with 4 years of experience. Her work focuses on groundwater and surface water supply development and hydrogeologic evaluations. She has worked on aquifer storage and recovery projects in Texas, wellfield development, and water supply planning projects throughout Central Texas. Clara received her bachelor's in geosciences from the University of Texas at Austin and master's in geosciences from Baylor University.

Jordan Furnans, PhD, PE, PG, Vice President – Texas Operations, LRE Water, LLC, Round Rock, TX
Jordan leads LRE Water, LLC in Round Rock. He has over 19 years of professional experience encompassing both field hydrologic data collection and analysis of data through the development and application of numerical models. He specializes in the areas of water right accounting; coupled field and model hydrodynamic investigations of estuaries, lakes and rivers; water availability modeling; watershed hydrology planning and management; floodplain management; hydrographic and sedimentation survey methods; and freshwater inflow and instream flow requirements for ecosystem health. Jordan is also an Adjunct Professor/Lecturer for the Department of Civil Engineering at The University of Texas at Austin, where he received is PhD in Civil Engineering. He received his BSE in Civil/Geological Engineering from Princeton University. Jordan is a Certified Floodplain Manager.

Mark Varhaug, PG, CPG, Member, Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists, President, Beacon Hill Energy, Dallas, TX
Mark was recently reappointed to the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists by Governor Greg Abbott, with his term expiring in 2029. He was first appointed to the Board in 2018. Mark is the President of Beacon Hill Energy, an independent exploration firm located in Dallas. Mark has over 45 years of experience in the practice of geology in the U.S. and internationally, including China, India, Southeast Asia, Mexico, Trinidad and South America. He serves on the Board of the Southwest Section of AAPG and is a member of the Geological Societies of Dallas, Houston, and West Texas. Mark is a licensed Professional Geoscientist in Texas and Louisiana. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Geology from Southern Methodist University.

Zachariah Hildebrand, PhD, Chief Scientific Officer, Infinity Water Solutions, El Paso, TX
Dr. Zacariah L. Hildenbrand is the Chief Scientific Officer at Infinity Water Solutions, a role that allows him to further his unconventional research in environmental stewardship within the energy sector. With a distinguished career spanning multiple roles, he has made significant contributions to research and academia, specifically in water science and reclamation. His work spans two decades and three continents. In addition to his role at Infinity Water Solutions, Dr. Hildenbrand is a partner at Medusa Analytical and serves as a director at the Curtis Mathes Corporation (OTC:CMCZ). Prior to joining Infinity, he held the esteemed position of Research Professor at the University of Texas at El Paso in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Demonstrating his leadership and commitment to responsible energy practices, Dr. Hildenbrand has served as a co-chairman for the EARTHx – Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation's 'Responsible Shale Energy Extraction' Symposia in previous years, as well as the co-chairmanship of the prestigious 2020 Responsible Energy Acquisition Symposium. Over the decade, Dr. Hildenbrand's research has yielded impactful results, including more than 70 peer-reviewed scientific journal articles and textbook chapters, showcasing his dedication to advancing knowledge in his field. His expertise is further recognized as an editor of the influential textbook 'Advances in Chemical Pollution, Environmental Management and Protection: Environmental Issues Concerning Hydraulic Fracturing'.

Susie Dai, PhD, Associate Professor and Director, Synthetic and Systems Biology Innovation Hub, Bioenvironmental Sciences Program, Plant Pathology and Microbiology, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX
Susie Dai obtained her BSc in Chemistry at Fudan University (2001) and her PhD degree in Chemistry at Duke University (2006). Dai conducted her post-doc training with Scripps Research Institute and Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Before joining the Texas A&M University faculty, she worked as the Associate Director of the Iowa State Hygienic Laboratory, Director of the Environmental Health Division from 2016-2019. Dai also worked as a Research Associate professor in the Office of the Texas State Chemist at Texas A&M University from 2008 to 2016. Dai serves as the Biomonitoring Director for State Hygienic Laboratory, leading the Iowa Statewide biomonitoring program from 2019. Dai currently is the director of Systems and Synthetic Biology Innovation Hub at Texas A&M University, an Associate Professor in the Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology and affiliated with the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Adam Midkiff, Project Engineer, Layne (a Granite Company), Mesa, AZ
Mr. Midkiff joined Layne in 2023 as a Project Engineer coming in with 7 years of water treatment experience. His responsibilities have included, design of municipal and industrial water and waste water treatment systems, managing projects and their budgets, leading field startup and commissioning work, and leading research and development projects. During his career he had developed strong knowledge in ion exchange, membrane treatment, single use and regenerative use absorptive medias, pressure filtration and biological filtration processes. Adam earned his Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from Arizona State.

Noah Heller, PG, CEO-President/Senior Hydrogeologist, BESST Inc., San Rafael, CA
Noah has been a practicing geologist for the past 35 years, has a MS in Geology and is a California registered geologist. He has received 16 patents and has more pending. Since 2005, Noah has focused on the commercialization and continuing technical development of the Tracer Flowmeter and Depth Dependent Sampler that was initially developed by the USGS and licensed exclusively to BESST. Over the past 15 years, BESST has profiled approximately 1,000 public supply wells, primarily for water quality and has amassed a large database of zonal geochemistry throughout California. BESST has applied this knowledge to better understand subsurface distribution patterns of naturally occurring and anthropogenic compounds. These insights have led to the development of a new application for the technology called Stacked Dynamic Profiling of Long Screened Test Wells. This technology and method are being applied at sites through the US.

Robert Bergsgaard, Sales & Business Development Engineer, AqueoUSvets, Woodbury, MN
With over 34 years of experience in the water treatment market, Mr. Bergsgaard brings a broad knowledge in project management, operations, service and various positions within the equipment sales and rental business. Mr. Bergsgaard's water treatment knowledge, desire to build excellent relationships with clients, provide creative problem solving, hard work, excellent customer service skills and leadership have provided customers with cradle to grave project success for clients throughout the US, Canada and abroad for many years.