

Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research IRRIGATION INNOVATION CONVENING SPEAKERS



Dr. Sally Rockey

Executive Director

Foundation for Food and
Agriculture Research

Dr. Sally Rockey became the inaugural Executive Director of the Foundation for Food and Agriculture (FFAR) in September 2015. Prior to this role, Dr. Rockey was an award-winning leader in Federal research, overseeing the operations of the extramural programs in both agriculture and biomedicine. She spent 19 years with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) where she held several positions within the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. Very early in her career she became the head of the competitive grants program, overseeing the extramural grants process and portfolio. In her final years with USDA she was the Chief Information Officer, applying her breadth of government knowledge to information technology. She brought her experience in agriculture research to her 11-year career at the National Institutes of Health, where she emphasized the connection between agriculture, food, and health. As Deputy Director for Extramural Research, Dr. Rockey oversaw the operations of the largest Federal extramural research program and led groundbreaking initiatives that have and will have a lasting positive impact on the research community.

Dr. Rockey received her Ph.D. in Entomology from the Ohio State University and did postgraduate work at University of Wisconsin prior to joining the government. She has devoted her career to improving people's lives through research and will continue her mission by seeing FFAR become an essential component of the scientific enterprise.



Dr. Christopher Neale

Director of Research

Water and Food Institute at
University of Nebraska

Christopher Neale's research interest lies in developing remote sensing applications for agriculture, hydrology and natural resources monitoring. He developed a low-cost airborne remote sensing system used in the western U.S. to map spatially distributed energy balance and evapotranspiration of riparian and agricultural vegetation. His most recent international projects were in the Dominican Republic, where he used aerial photography and remote sensing to map and monitor irrigated agriculture and developed a comprehensive database of irrigation water users in a GIS environment.

Neale joined the University of Nebraska in 2013 and oversees the Water for Food Institute's research efforts, engaging faculty in new projects and initiating partnerships with organizations and universities worldwide. Previously, Neale was a professor of irrigation engineering at Utah State University, where he led efforts in remote sensing and agricultural water resources management since 1988. He is president of the international Commission on Remote Sensing of the International Association of Hydrological Sciences and has an extensive background in water research and management projects in the western U.S., Africa, South America and the Caribbean. He holds a doctorate in agricultural engineering from Colorado State University.



Dr. David Zoldoske

Director
Center for Irrigation
Technology

Executive Director
Water Initiatives at California
State University – Fresno

Dr. David Zoldoske serves as the director of the Center for Irrigation Technology and the Executive Director of Water Initiatives at California State University Fresno, where he has been actively working on “water use efficiency” issues for over 35 years.

David was named “person of the year” by both the California Irrigation Institute and the Irrigation Association, he is a Senior Fellow with the California Council on Science and Technology, member of the research network for the PPIC Water Policy Center and an Honorary Member of the American Society of Irrigation Consultants.

David served as vice-chair for the California Department of Water Resources strategic planning caucus for New Water Technology and as vice-chair for the Model Landscape Ordinance. He is a past President of the Irrigation Association and the American Society of Agronomy (California chapter) and was the founding Executive Director for the Water Resources and Policy Initiative for the California State University System (2008-2013), where he still serves as Associate Director.



Dr. Stephen Smith

Colorado Water Institute
Irrigation Association
FFA Water Scarcity Advisory
Board

Stephen W. Smith, Ph.D., FASIC is an irrigation and agricultural engineer. He is certified as a CLIA and CAIS with the Irrigation Association. He is currently on the Irrigation Association board of directors and the Irrigation Foundation board of trustees. Stephen founded Aqua Engineering, Inc. in 1975 and taught irrigation system design at Colorado State University for 20 years. Technical expertise, in addition to landscape and agricultural irrigation design, includes water rights evaluations, canal modernization, and SCADA implementation.

Geographically, his irrigation engineering project experience includes projects throughout the United States and more than a dozen foreign countries. Stephen is past national president of both the American Society of Irrigation Consultants and the Irrigation Association. He is a board member with the Colorado Water Innovation Cluster. He also serves on the Board of the Loudon Irrigating Canal & Reservoir Co. and farms under this 120-year-old canal system in northeastern Colorado.



Dr. Thomas Trout

Research Leader (retired)
USDA-ARS
Water Management
Research Unit

Dr. Thomas Trout is a graduate of Colorado State University in Agricultural Engineering. He specializes in irrigation water management. Dr. Trout spent 32 years with USDA Agricultural Research Service in Twin Falls, Idaho (13 years), Fresno, CA (10 years), Fort Collins, CO (10 years). While in each location, he set up irrigation research field facilities. He was the research leader for Irrigation Water Management Research Labs for 20 years.



Dr. LaKisha Odom

Scientific Program Director
Foundation for Food and
Agriculture Research

Dr. LaKisha Odom joined FFAR in September 2016 as a Scientific Program Director to pursue her commitment to promoting the use of innovative science and interdisciplinary thinking to tackle today's complex challenges in food and agriculture. She is also extremely committed to cultivating increased diversity in a new generation of food and agriculture scientists.

Dr. Odom developed her passions for the intersectional space of research and policy while working at the U.S. EPA in the Office of Research and Development and the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response's Brownfield's Redevelopment Program. In 2013, Dr. Odom became an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science and Technology Policy Fellow at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Biotechnology Regulatory Service where she managed a diverse portfolio which included working with the OECD Working Group for the Harmonization of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology.



MaryLou Smith

*Policy & Collaboration
Specialist*

Colorado Water Institute

As a policy and collaboration specialist at Colorado State University's Colorado Water Institute, MaryLou designs and facilitates group processes for stakeholder groups working through complex water policy issues throughout Colorado and the West. collaboration specialist at Colorado State University's Colorado Water Institute, MaryLou designs and facilitates group process for stakeholder groups working through complex water policy issues throughout Colorado and the West. Much of her work centers around agricultural/urban/environmental water sharing strategies, groundwater/surface water conjunctive use challenges, and the integration of land use policy with water supply policy.

MaryLou grew up on a cotton and alfalfa farm in eastern New Mexico. She earned a master's degree in educational psychology from New Mexico State University and facilitation and mediation certificates from CDR Associates in Boulder, Colorado. She has given presentations on her work in places as diverse as Tehran, Iran; Fortaleza, Brazil; and Wray, Colorado!