



City of Dallas

Office of Environmental
Quality & Sustainability

2025 NORTH TEXAS CLIMATE SYMPOSIUM



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2025

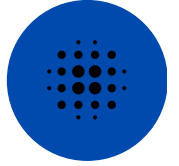
Hilton Anatole

2201 N Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX 75207

**PRESENTED BY CITY OF DALLAS OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL
QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

WELCOME**10:00 AM***Kathryn Guerra***KEYNOTE: THE HEAT IS ON: CLIMATE HEALTH IN AN ERA OF TURMOIL AND UNCERTAINTY****10:15 AM***Dr. Rose Jones***CLIMATE, LOCAL AGRICULTURE, & HEALTH: THE GROWING IMPACT ON FOOD SYSTEMS****11:15 AM***Dr. Kelseanna Hollis-Hansen, Dr. Owen Lynch, Rabekha Siebert***LUNCH IN THE IMPERIAL BALLROOM****12:00 PM***Featuring General David Petraeus***CLIMATE MIGRATION TRENDS IN NORTH TEXAS: SHIFTING POPULATIONS AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS****1:15 PM***Commissioner Brigid Shea, Meredith Cebelak***AIR QUALITY & HEALTH: PROTECTING COMMUNITIES FROM ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS****1:45 PM***Dr. Folashade Afolabi, Dr. Barry Lachman, Natasha Hemeng, RN***POLICY AND PREPAREDNESS IN NORTH TEXAS: RESPONDING TO CLIMATE AND HEALTH CHALLENGES****2:30 PM***Susan Alvarez, Chris Klaus, Kathryn Guerra***BRIDGING SCIENCE AND COMMUNITY: TRANSLATIONAL APPROACHES TO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH****3:30 PM***Dr. Joseph Oppong, Dr. Kari Northeim, Dr. Shelley Stonecipher, Priscilla Tetteh, Nicholas Lawson***CITY OF DALLAS OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY: CECAP UPDATES****4:15 PM***Oppong Hemeng, Maritza Figy, Rosaerlinda Cisneros, Natalie Requenez, Yaritza Torres Espinoza, Freddie Ortiz***CLOSING****4:45 PM***Paul White II*

2025 NORTH TEXAS CLIMATE SYMPOSIUM



SESSIONS

Time

WELCOME

10:00 AM

Welcome to the 8th annual North Texas Climate Symposium

Kathryn Guerra

KEYNOTE: THE HEAT IS ON: CLIMATE HEALTH IN AN ERA OF TURMOIL AND UNCERTAINTY

10:15 AM

Heat is the number one health and death threat from climate change. When temperatures spike, so do emergency room visits, hospital admissions, and incidents of cardiovascular and respiratory disease, pregnancy complications, mental health crises, substance use, crime, and domestic violence. This session explores the mounting challenges of extreme heat amid deep federal cuts to climate and public health funding and resources. Focusing on Dallas, we will examine the disproportionate impact heat poses for vulnerable communities and highlight strategies to reduce risk through urban planning and community engagement in a time of turmoil, uncertainty, and rising temperatures.

Dr. Rose Jones

CLIMATE, LOCAL AGRICULTURE, & HEALTH: THE GROWING IMPACT ON FOOD SYSTEMS

11:15 AM

As climate disasters increasingly disrupt agriculture, food security in North Texas is facing new challenges. This session will examine how climate change is affecting local farmers, food supply chains, and public health, with strategies to promote resilience and sustainable practices.

Dr. Kelseanna Hollis-Hansen: Nourishing Health for Life: The Importance of Climate-Conscious Food Systems and Food as Medicine

Dr. Owen Lynch: Addressing the unintended consequences of an industrial food system: Lesson, limitations and the potential of a local, sustainable food system.

Rabekha Siebert (Moderator)

LUNCH IN THE IMPERIAL BALLROOM**12:00 PM***Imperial Ballroom*

Featuring EarthX2025 Keynote speaker, General David

CLIMATE MIGRATION TRENDS IN NORTH TEXAS: SHIFTING POPULATIONS AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**1:15 PM**

As climate-related disasters and environmental changes displace communities, North Texas is experiencing increasing migration trends. This session will examine how these shifts impact public health, infrastructure, and social services, with a focus on preparedness and response strategies.

Commissioner Brigid Shea
Meredith Cebelak (Moderator)

AIR QUALITY & HEALTH: PROTECTING COMMUNITIES FROM ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS**1:45 PM**

Air pollution is a major contributor to respiratory and cardiovascular issues. This session will address North Texas air quality concerns, emphasizing the impact of pollutants, ozone levels, and environmental changes on public health, while offering solutions for mitigation and awareness.

Dr. Folashade Afolabi
Dr. Barry Lachman
Natasha Hemeng, RN

POLICY AND PREPAREDNESS IN NORTH TEXAS: RESPONDING TO CLIMATE AND HEALTH CHALLENGES**2:30 PM**

Local governments and healthcare providers are actively developing policies to address the effects of climate and environmental change. This session will explore innovative strategies, emergency preparedness measures, and cross-sector collaboration aimed at protecting public health in the face of climate-related challenges.

Susan Alvarez
Chris Klaus
Kathryn Guerra

BRIDGING SCIENCE AND COMMUNITY: TRANSLATIONAL APPROACHES TO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**3:30 PM**

This session explores geographically based, interdisciplinary methods and community-engaged research to address environmental drivers of health and vulnerability across diverse populations and geographies. Panelists will explore practical methods in environmental health, including spatial analysis, the One Health framework, and community-driven initiatives linking academic research to tangible outcomes on topics such as pollution of air, water, and land, zoonotic diseases, and disease mapping. Additionally, two student-led presentations will spotlight place-based health disparities—specifically maternal health care access and food deserts—as barriers to building climate resilience in communities. Through discussion and collaboration, attendees will explore how research that integrates geography, public health, and lived experience can advance sustainable solutions to mitigate climate-related health impacts.

Dr. Kari Northeim

Dr. Joseph Oppong

Dr. Shelley Stonecipher

Priscilla Tetteh

Nicholas Lawson

CITY OF DALLAS OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY**4:15 PM**

Comprehensive Environmental and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) Updates

Oppong Hemeng: Comprehensive Environmental and Climate Action Plan

Maritza Figy: Urban Heat Island Study

Rosaerlinda Cisneros: Switch Together Partnership

Natalie Requenez: Green Business Certification

Yaritza Torres Espinoza: Urban Agriculture Program

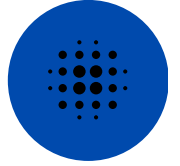
Freddie Ortiz: Dallas Community Air Management Program

CLOSING**4:45 PM**

Thank you for attending. The 9th annual North Texas Climate Symposium will be held in Spring 2026

Paul White II

2025 NORTH TEXAS CLIMATE SYMPOSIUM



SPEAKERS

In order of appearance



KATHRYN GUERRA

Chairwoman, City of Dallas Environmental Commission

Kathryn Guerra is an environmental equity advocate who works with communities, organizations and policy makers to identify and implement collaborative solutions to longstanding and systemic environmental issues. She is chairwoman of the City of Dallas Environmental Commission, the 36-member community-led and equity-focused advisory body overseeing implementation of the city's climate action plans. She has worked to advance environmental policy at the local, state and federal levels of government. She currently works for the nonprofit consumer advocacy organization, Public Citizen, where she is the TCEQ Campaign Director.



ROSE JONES, PHD

Founder & Principal, Rapid Anthropology Consulting

Rose Jones is a medical anthropologist with extensive experience in academic medicine, applied research, and grassroots advocacy. Dr. Jones has held teaching and research positions at UT Southwestern, Parkland Hospital, and Children's Medical Center. She is currently conducting research for a forthcoming book on extreme heat, public health, and human rights in Texas.



DR. KELSEANNA HOLLIS-HANSEN

Assistant Professor of Public Health, Principal Investigator and Director of the Nutrition Initiatives and Community Health Equity lab at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas

Kelseanna Hollis-Hansen, PhD, MPH is an Assistant Professor of Public Health and Principal Investigator and Director of the Nutrition Initiatives and Community Health Equity (NICHE) lab at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. Dr. Hollis-Hansen has 15 years of experience identifying and developing effective multi-component food retail and charitable food system interventions that increase access to nutritious options in under-resourced communities and encourage healthy lifestyles. Some of her recent projects include providing medically tailored meal (MTM) programs for patients experiencing food insecurity while receiving cancer treatment, MTM and digital behavioral application programs for patients stopping GLP-1 receptor agonist treatment, and medically tailored grocery and food resource coaching programs for patients of a safety-net clinic living with diet-related chronic diseases.



DR. OWEN LYNCH

Associate Professor, Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University

Owen is an Associate Professor & Altshuler Distinguish Teaching Professor in the Meadows School of the Arts at SMU. He is the Director of the Corporate Communication & Public Affairs Organizational Communication Track. He served as a Senior Researcher Fellow at the Hunt Institute of Engineering & Humanity at the Lyle School of Engineering at SMU. As the director of community research, he led the Asset Based Community Development initiative—utilizes existing local assets and communities to address current problems. He was recognized by the National Communication Association –Applied Research Achievement in 2019 for his Engaged Scholarship. Owen is active in the city Dallas concerning health equity, fresh food access, and restorative justice issues. He is a co-founder and Executive Director of Restorative Farm a Dallas-based coalition nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the lack of healthy food options, employment, career training, and economic development opportunities in Dallas with a special focus on the South Dallas and Fair Park area.



RABEKHA SIEBERT, MODERATOR

Urban Agriculture Plan Manager, City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Rabekha is a sustainability practitioner who works on solutions that produce equitable sustenance and improved quality of life for communities. As the City of Dallas' Comprehensive Urban Agriculture Plan Manager, she works collaboratively to facilitate partnerships and develop a collective vision across diverse sets of stakeholders to promote building a resilient food system in the Dallas region. She is committed to regenerative agriculture models that serve the triple bottom line; people, planet, and profitable livelihood.

Rabekha's 13 years of food system and sustainability experience include working in food systems across Europe, strategizing community resiliency through urban design, managing supply chains in the food industry, and advocating for legislative climate action on behalf of marginalized immigrant farmers. After finishing her thesis on "Building Community Resiliency through Sustainable Planning" at Arizona State University, Rabekha worked as a City Planner in Lafayette Louisiana. Now, putting roots down in Dallas, Texas, Rabekha is raising a four-legged friend and a lush garden.



COMMISSIONER BRIDIG SHEA

Travis County Precinct 2

Travis County Commissioner Brigid Shea has been a determined advocate for climate progress and a leader in climate action. A former NPR reporter and former Austin City Council member, she's proved her grit by fighting climate change in Texas since 1988. Since her election to the Travis County Commissioners Court in 2014, Brigid's work to reverse climate change and better prepare residents for climate impacts has won 4 national awards. She also currently serves as the U.S. Board Chair of ICLEI USA - Local Governments for Sustainability.



MEREDITH CEBELAK, MODERATOR

North Texas State Lead- Transportation market at Gresham Smith

Meredith Cebelak, PhD, P.E. is the North Texas State Lead for the Transportation market at Gresham Smith. With over 20 years of experience in the design, implementation and evaluation of multi-faceted transportation engineering solutions, she is driven to finding innovative solutions that provide meaningful outcomes for clients. Meredith is passionate about creating safe and efficient mobility for all users and seeks opportunities to enhance people's everyday lives through transportation solutions.



DR. FOLASHADE AFOLABI

*Assistant Professor Pediatrics, Division Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine, Medical Director Asthma Management Program
UT Southwestern Medical Center*

Folashade Catherine Afolabi, M.D., is a pediatric pulmonologist at Children's HealthSM and is an Associate Professor at UT Southwestern Medical Center. She specializes in chronic lung disease, cystic fibrosis and ventilator dependency. Dr. Afolabi earned her medical degree at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. She is board certified by the American Board of Pediatrics/Pulmonology. Dr. Afolabi has published widely on pediatric lung issues, including home ventilator settings for children, probiotic aspiration pneumonia, and e-cigarettes and vaping. She is a member of the American Thoracic Society, the Texas Medical Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Dr. Afolabi grew up in Austin and New Orleans and holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Case Western Reserve University.



DR. BARRY LACHMAN

President and CEO of Lachman Community Development and Consulting Services

Dr. Lachman is a nationally recognized leader in healthcare for the underserved. He has over 50 years experience in providing care, program development and administration and advocacy for underserved populations. He has over 25 years experience as a managed care Medical Director, He is nationally recognized for his leadership in the management of asthma and preterm birth prevention. His present work focuses on improving underserved communities and individuals with emphasis on addressing social factors including food insecurity, affordable housing, healthcare access, small business development and workforce development. Related work focuses on reopening from COVID, new models of care and use of new communication and technology to community based care. Dr. Lachman serves on the Dallas Environmental Commission and is Vice chair of the Health Subcommittee.



NATASHA HEMENG, RN

MSN, MBA, RN

Natasha Hemeng is a master's-prepared registered nurse with dual graduate degrees in Nursing and Business Administration, and a passionate advocate for maternal and child health equity. With over a decade of experience spanning clinical practice, education, health systems consulting, and research. Natasha brings a dynamic and holistic perspective to improving healthcare outcomes for women and children. Natasha served as a Registered Nurse and Clinical researcher at Johns Hopkins University's Division of General Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, where she contributed to community-engaged research focused on pediatric and maternal health disparities in Baltimore. Through this work, Natasha advocated for both individual families and structural change. As a clinical educator, she has trained and mentored nurses across the continuum of care, with a special focus on maternal health quality, patient safety, and evidence-based practice. Natasha has led initiatives that prepare clinicians to deliver equitable, trauma-informed care, integrating public health principles with bedside practice. Natasha is focused on systems and innovation and partners with organizations to reimagine how healthcare is designed, delivered, and measured. Her work sits at the intersection of clinical policy, practice, and innovation.



SUSAN ALVAREZ

Director of Environment and Development at the North Central Texas Council of Governments

Susan Alvarez manages programs related to water, material resources, regional codes, public works and regional climate action. She has a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering with a minor in Geology from Rice University, and Water Resources post-graduate work. In addition to registration as a Texas Professional Engineer and as a Certified Floodplain Manager, she is also a Texas Master Naturalist, with about 40 years of relevant experience, including environmental restoration projects in Texas, the Pacific Northwest, the desert southwest, and Charleston Harbor. She recently served on the Southern Great Plains Chapter Author Team for the 5th National Climate Assessment. Local efforts include leading the Dallas Comprehensive Environmental and Climate Action Plan, the Dallas Urban Forest Master Plan, and the regional DFW- Air Quality Improvement Plan, a Priority Climate Action Plan under the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Program.



CHRIS KLAUS

Senior Program Manager, North Central Texas Council of Governments

Chris Klaus has been on staff in the Transportation Department of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Dallas-Fort Worth area, since July 1994. He is a Senior Program Manager managing the department's Air Quality Management activities, which respond to federal air quality requirements and work towards reaching attainment of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Chris received his Bachelors Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1994, and his Masters Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2003



DR. JOSEPH OPPONG

Professor of Geography and Associate Vice-Provost for Graduate Education and Academic Associate Dean of the Robert Toulouse Graduate School at the University of North Texas

Joseph Oppong is a Professor of Geography and Associate Vice-Provost for Graduate Education and Academic Associate Dean of the Robert Toulouse Graduate School at the University of North Texas, where he has been teaching and conducting research since 1992. Dr. Oppong's research centers on the geography of disease and health services and seeks to answer the question: who is getting what disease where and why? His current research focuses on disease mapping and simulating geographic patterns of communicable disease spread. Dr. Oppong is the 2025 recipient of the Melinda S. Meade Distinguished Scholarship Award in Health and Medical Geography. In this panel, Dr. Oppong will present highlights from his Health and Medical Geography course at UNT.



DR. KARI NORTHEIM

Assistant Professor, University of North Texas Health Science Center

Dr. Kari Northeim is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Population and Community Health at the University of North Texas Health Science Center. Her teaching and research focus on environmental health, geospatial modeling, and pre-hospital care outcomes. She incorporates climate science into courses like Health and Climate Change and Environmental Determinants of Health to prepare students for real-world challenges. At the Climate and Public Health event, Dr. Northeim will speak on academic dissemination of climate impacts and how public health education is evolving to address climate-related outcomes.



DR. SHELLEY STONECIPHER

*Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Population & Community Health, College of Public Health
University of North Texas Health Science Center*

Dr. Shelley Stonecipher is an adjunct assistant professor in zoonotic diseases and environmental health at the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth. She served as an infectious disease epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC) and as a zoonosis control veterinarian at the Texas Department of State Health Services. She has investigated numerous infectious disease outbreaks at the intersection of human, animal, and environmental health. She earned her Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine from Texas A&M University and her Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.



PRISCILLA TETTEH

*M.S Geography, Department of Geography & the Environment
University of North Texas*

Priscilla Tetteh is a final-year master's student in Geography at the University of North Texas. Her thesis examines geographic disparities in access to maternal healthcare facilities across Texas. She aims to improve access for vulnerable and underserved populations. Priscilla plans to pursue a PhD in Public Health. Her goal is to conduct research that promotes equitable access to care, especially for women in rural and marginalized communities.

In this panel, she will share insights from her work on maternal healthcare access and discuss how GIS can inform equitable health interventions and policy planning.



NICHOLAS LAWSON

Graduate Student, University of North Texas

Nicholas Lawson is a graduate student at the University of North Texas with a research focus on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the social determinants of health. His work leverages spatial data and analysis to uncover disparities in food access, chronic disease outcomes, and broader public health challenges. By integrating GIS with frameworks such as political ecology, Nicholas examines how social, economic, and environmental factors interact to shape health outcomes across diverse communities.



OPPONG HEMENG

Senior Climate Coordinator, City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Oppong Hemeng is the Senior Climate Coordinator for the City of Dallas, responsible for overseeing the implementation of the city's Comprehensive Environmental and Climate Action Plan (CECAP). His work focuses on key areas such as climate impact, community sustainability, and environmental quality policy. He manages the Air Policy & Climate Team, which oversees the Dallas Community Air Monitoring Program, and leads the Urban Agriculture initiative aimed at addressing food access in the city. Oppong brings years of experience in environmental, social, and governance practices across both the public and private sectors.



MARITZA FIGY

Environmental Coordinator II, City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Maritza Figy is an Environmental Coordinator at the City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability. She holds a Bachelor's of Science in Biology from Loyola University Chicago, and a Master of Science in Environmental Sustainability from Kingston University London. She began working for the City in 2015 in Stormwater Management, and in 2023, joined the CECAP Air Compliance team.



ROSAERLINDA CISNEROS

Climate Coordinator, City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Rosaerlinda Cisneros is a Climate Coordinator with the City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability. She's a proud Aggie and holds a Bachelor's in Environmental Geoscience and a Master of Science in Energy. She began working with the City in 2015, where she worked with the Dallas Water Utilities' Water Purification Division for 8 years. For the past two years, she has been part of the CECAP team, driving initiatives to address climate challenges in Dallas.



NATALIE REQUENEZ

Environmental Justice Coordinator, City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Natalie Requenez is an Environmental Sustainability and Resilience Coordinator for the Office of Environmental Quality & Sustainability. She holds a bachelor's and a Master's degree in Public Health. She began working for the City of Dallas in 2023 with prior municipal experience and a passion for environmental justice.



YARITZA TORRES ESPINOZA

Climate Coordinator II, City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Yaritza Torres Espinoza is a Climate Coordinator II in the Urban Agriculture Division at the City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality & Sustainability. She oversees data analysis and community engagement for the city's first Comprehensive Urban Agriculture Plan (CUAP). Yaritza holds a B.S. in Environmental Science with a minor in Geography from the University of Texas at Austin. Her early career involved regional and international campaign organizing, leading on-ground messaging, and GIS-driven analysis. Current efforts aim to increase Dallas' agricultural land by bridging the gap with local stakeholders and government on regulatory barriers and land access through initiatives like the Urban Agriculture and Community Health GIS Explorer.



FREDDIE ORTIZ

Environmental Coordinator III, City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Freddie Ortiz is a native Dallasite who grew up in Lake Highlands in Northeast Dallas. He attended Southern Methodist University where he received a BSc in Geology and a minor in Art. Freddie joined the City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality & Sustainability in March of 2007, working on the non-hazardous spill response and facility inspection team, then moved to Due Diligence/MSD in 2008, the Sustainability, Outreach, and Training team in 2011, joined the Environmental Management System & Internal Audit Team in 2018, and currently in the Air Quality and Climate Division since 2023. He is currently focusing on installing and maintaining non-regulatory air sensors for the D-CAMP program, creating an incentive program for the Landscape Equipment Transition Program, and updating Dallas's GHG Inventory.

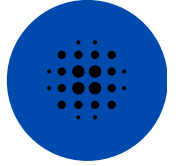


PAUL WHITE II

Director (I), City of Dallas, Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Paul White II is the Interim Director for the City of Dallas, Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability, responsible for driving environmental initiatives, regulatory compliance, and advancing sustainability efforts in the City. Paul brings over 20 years of experience, including 17 years in leadership roles across stormwater management, sustainability, natural resource management, environmental risk management, and environmental due diligence. He has been a strong advocate for equity and environmental justice, collaborating with community leaders and government agencies to address key environmental challenges. Paul is a Certified Floodplain Manager and Registered Environmental Manager. He holds a graduate degree in Organizational Leadership from the University of Oklahoma and bachelor's degree in biology from Kentucky State University.

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THANK YOU

