



2026 North Texas Climate Symposium Program

Presented By:



City of Dallas

**Office of Environmental
Quality & Sustainability**

Welcome



Welcome to the 9th Annual North Texas Climate Symposium, hosted by the City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality & Sustainability (OEQS). We are pleased to convene community members, local governments, businesses, academic partners, and regional leaders for a day of collaboration, learning, and action focused on advancing climate solutions across North Texas.

Each year, the Symposium serves as a platform to share knowledge, highlight innovative practices, and strengthen partnerships that support a more sustainable and resilient Dallas. This year's theme, "Resilience in Action: Local Solutions in a Changing Climate," focuses on the capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to support both mitigation and adaptation efforts. It reflects our shared commitment to preparing for and responding to the increasing impacts of climate change, while examining local challenges and advancing strategies that reduce risk, strengthen resilience, and improve quality of life over the long term.

Today's program highlights the City of Dallas' approach to climate resilience and sustainability, alongside case studies from departments working across infrastructure, planning, and community services. Sessions will explore key topics including flood resilience in North Texas, the role of emerging technologies and innovation in shaping climate-ready communities, and how higher education institutions are advancing climate action through research and engagement. Discussions will also examine resilient building design and retrofit strategies, underscoring the importance of the built environment in responding to a changing climate.

We are also pleased to welcome Angela Hodges Gott as the new Director and Chief Resiliency Officer of OEQS. Under her leadership, the City continues to advance environmental stewardship, regulatory excellence, and community-centered climate action. We invite you to learn more about her background and vision in the following pages.

Thank you for joining us and for your commitment to building a more resilient and sustainable future for Dallas.

About City of Dallas'

Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability Director and Chief Resiliency Officer

Angela Hodges Gott is the Director and Chief Resiliency Officer for the City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability. She leads the City's environmental and climate resiliency strategies, supports regulatory compliance, and advances practical, community-focused sustainability initiatives.

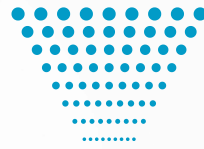
Angela is an accomplished attorney and strategic leader with more than 15 years of experience in environmental law, regulatory compliance, and federal grants management. Most recently, she served as Assistant Regional Counsel with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Dallas, providing legal counsel to programs administering over \$1 billion in federal grant funds each year, including initiatives that strengthen environmental and climate resiliency.

Known for a solution-oriented approach and the ability to translate complex legal frameworks into practical strategies, Angela is passionate about leading her teams in strategic thinking, regulatory problem-solving, and delivering impactful environmental and public policy outcomes.



Angela Hodges-Gott

Program Overview



Time	Session	Duration
10:00 AM	Opening	15 minutes
10:15 AM	Keynote	45 minutes
11:00 AM	Session One	60 minutes
12:00 PM	Lunch	90 minutes
1:30 PM	Session Two	20 minutes
1:50 PM	Session Three	45 minutes
2:35 PM	Session Four	45 minutes
3:20 PM	Session Five	35 minutes
3:55 PM	Closing	5 minutes
4:00 PM	EarthX Plenary Session	60 minutes
5:00 PM	EarthX Networking Reception	120 minutes

Session Overview



▶ Opening Remarks

- Welcome from the City of Dallas Councilmember and Chair of the Parks, Trails, and Environment Committee, Katherine Stewart

▶ Keynote

- James McGuire will discuss how nature-based solutions can strengthen climate resilience across North Texas, drawing on The Nature Conservancy's work to advance mitigation and adaptation strategies. He will highlight the role of prairie restoration and community-centered conservation to illustrate how natural systems can reduce risk, support local economies, and improve long-term quality of life in the region.

▶ **Session 1: City of Dallas Approach to Climate Resilience and Sustainability**

- The City Of Dallas Approach to Climate Resilience and Sustainability with Case Studies from Various City Departments including Parks and Recreation, Aviation, and Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability

Session Overview



Session 2: Building retrofit and resilient designs in North Texas

- As North Texas continues to grow, improving the performance and resilience of both existing and new buildings is critical to addressing climate challenges. This session explores innovative approaches to residential retrofits and climate-responsive design, from engaging homeowners as active participants in energy solutions to integrating holistic strategies across architecture, water systems, and materials. Speakers will highlight practical, scalable approaches that support long-term sustainability, resilience, and improved quality of life.

Session 3: Exploring the intersection of public policy and technology innovation, including AI and climate resilient community approaches.

- As communities work to strengthen climate resilience, both policy and emerging technologies play a critical role in shaping effective solutions. This session explores how innovations such as artificial intelligence can accelerate sustainability efforts, alongside new policy opportunities like Texas' backup power initiatives that support resilient, distributed energy systems. Attendees will gain insight into practical strategies that align technological advancement with policy frameworks to build more adaptive, climate-ready communities.

Session Overview



▶ **Session 4: How colleges and universities are educating around the topics of climate action, sustainability, in resilience through research and community engagement.**

- Institutions of higher education play a critical role in preparing the next generation of climate leaders through research, education, and community engagement. This session highlights how universities are equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and real-world experiences needed to drive meaningful change, featuring insights from classroom innovation and academic leadership. Speakers will share approaches to fostering collaboration, critical thinking, and community impact in advancing climate action and resilience.

▶ **Session 5: A Strategic Approach to Flood Resilience in North Texas**

- As North Texas experiences rapid growth and more intense rainfall, communities face increasing flood risk and infrastructure challenges. This session highlights the North Central Texas Council of Governments' Transportation & Stormwater Infrastructure (TSI) study, showcasing future flood scenarios and how integrated planning across transportation, stormwater, and environmental systems can reduce risk and strengthen regional resilience. Attendees will also be introduced to practical tools and strategies that support more adaptive, climate-ready communities.

Session Overview



Closing

- Kathryn Guerra of the Environmental Commission will provide brief closing remarks, reflecting on key themes from the day and the importance of continued collaboration. She will highlight how, together with the City of Dallas, we can continue advancing climate resilience efforts across our communities.

Guest Speakers

Kathy Stewart, an attorney by profession, is a long-time resident of Lake Highlands, District 10, where she and her husband, Robb raised their three children. She served as the Executive Director for the Uptown public improvement district from 2019 to 2022 and Executive Director of the Lake Highlands PIDs from 2014 to 2019. Prior to her work with public improvement districts, Kathy was an owner and managing partner of Highlands Cafe, a restaurant owned by twenty families in Lake Highlands. Kathy has served as the president of the White Rock Valley neighborhood association, PTA president for Lake Highlands High School and is a sustaining member of the Lake Highlands Women's League. She is currently a member of NorthPark Presbyterian Church. Her current role at the City of Dallas is as City Council member and Chair of the Parks, Trails and the Environment Committee.



Katherine Stewart

Isaac Ellison is acting Manager – Environmental, overseeing the Sustainability, Compliance, and Voluntary Noise Program for Dallas Love Field and Dallas Executive Airport, with 7 years of service. Isaac previously served as the Airport Noise Monitoring Specialist and Supervisor – Environmental, and before that, he worked at DFW Airport as the Terminal Ramp Coordinator for Terminal E. He holds his Certified Member (C.M.) certification from AAAE, his Certified Scrum Master certification, and his Private Pilot and Commercial Pilot Licenses.



Isaac Ellison

Guest Speakers

James McGuire serves as The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Texas state director, bringing more than two decades of experience in environmental policy and leadership to one of the most ecologically diverse and significant programs in the world.

An avid outdoorsman with a deep appreciation for the biological and geological diversity of Texas, James spends his free time exploring—from Big Bend to the Gulf Coast and everywhere in between. Wherever he finds himself, James is a dedicated advocate for enjoying and preserving the natural heritage of the Lone Star State.

James joins TNC after a distinguished career in environmental law and policy, including a tenure at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, where he managed some of the most challenging issues in Texas and Washington, D.C. He previously served as the director of Environment and Sustainability at Dallas City Hall. In Dallas, he was instrumental in crafting and securing the adoption of the city's first Comprehensive Environmental and Climate Action Plan (CECAP), a landmark initiative lauded for its innovative and practical approach to urban sustainability.

In addition to his public service, James served as a partner at a major law firm and is currently Public Policy and Administration faculty at Southern Methodist University, where he teaches a graduate-level course on sustainability and public policy.

James' approach is people-focused, respectful of communities, pragmatic, and grounded in sound policy and science. He holds undergraduate degrees from Duke University in earth and ocean sciences and English, a Master of Science in geosciences from the University of Texas at Austin and a Juris Doctor from Emory University School of Law with a focus on the environment and natural resources law.



James McGuire

Guest Speakers

Frances McGee is a Lead Environmental Coordinator for the Dallas Park and Recreation Department. She has worked for the Dallas Park and Recreation Department for 11 years. Frances holds a Bachelor of Arts in Physics from the University of Arkansas with minors in Theatre Dance and Biology. She has a Masters of Science in Environmental Science from the Ohio State University. She is the Environmental Management Representative (EMR) for the Dallas Park and Recreation Department and is a Registered Environmental Manager (REM). Frances oversees environmental compliance, pollution prevention, and continual improvement of Dallas Park and Recreation's facilities and partners. Her team offers environmental training to the department employees annually that includes compliance and stewardship classes. She leads the Eco Warriors, a green team for Park and Recreation employees, that work to incorporate sustainability into daily processes and cultivate a culture with sustainability at its core



Frances Ockles McGee

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.



Oppong Hemeng

Guest Speakers

Brett Johnson is the Superintendent-Environmental Quality aka “Conservation Manager” with the Dallas Park and Recreation Department, leading environmental quality, urban forestry, and wildlife management across the city’s park system. He oversees implementation of key initiatives aligned with Dallas’ Comprehensive Environmental and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) and Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP), with a focus on tree canopy expansion, invasive species management, climate resilience, and conservation outreach. Brett holds a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from Texas A&M University and an M.S. from Texas Tech University. A Certified Wildlife Biologist and ISA Certified Arborist, he brings over 20 years of experience bridging science, operations, and community engagement. His work emphasizes scalable, cost-effective strategies that translate conservation goals into measurable outcomes while strengthening public support for urban environmental stewardship.



Brett Johnson

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.



Rosaerlinda Mendez

Guest Speakers

Fazil Shaikh is the Senior Director of Strategy & Growth at Generac Industrial Energy. His work focuses on advancing microgrids, distributed energy resources (DER), resiliency solutions, and data-center offering.

Over the last 15+ years, Fazil has held leadership roles in retail and wholesale power and gas, demand response, backup power, distributed generation, and microgrids. His career includes impactful tenures at Dominion Energy, NRG Energy, and as a founder of Palm Energy.

Fazil holds a BS in Economics from Texas A&M University and completed postgraduate studies in Artificial Intelligence for Leaders at the University of Texas. Fazil is a Native Texan and resides in Frisco, TX with his wife and three children.



Fazil Shaikh



Ian Seamans

As the City Hall Advocate for Environment Texas, Ian works to secure clean air, clean water, well-funded parks, and a livable climate across North Texas. Ian has successfully led campaigns to put bird-friendly glass on the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center expansion, to include environmental reforms in the City of Dallas's comprehensive plan, and to protect public transit funding in North Texas.

Guest Speakers



Geeta Menon

Geeta held leadership roles at companies like SAP, Dell and Accenture, building enterprise software. She now serves as faculty for Sustainability at the Jindal School of Management, University of Texas at Dallas, integrating ESG and emerging tech into business education at UTD. She is also founder of OneEarthOneChance, an environmental nonprofit that has expanded urban forests with 7,500 native trees and plants and hosted 150+ educational workshops and cleanups.

Susan Alvarez currently serves as the Director of Environment and Development at the North Central Texas Council of Governments, where she 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 Comprehensive Urban Agriculture 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.



Susan Alvarez

Guest Speakers

Dr. June Ann Jones is an assistant professor of instruction in Environmental Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas. Over the past 9 years, she has taught courses in environmental politics, political theory, philosophy, and US politics at private, public, and community colleges. Her current courses include Environment in America and Nature, Health, and Community. She also serves as the coordinator of the Environmental Studies minor for the School of Interdisciplinary Studies and serves on the campus Sustainability Committee. In her free time, she enjoys visiting parks and biking around Richardson with her family.



June Ann Jones

Jasleen Dhillon is a sustainability leader, program manager, and higher education professional serving as Assistant Director of the Hunt Institute for Engineering & Humanity at Southern Methodist University. She specializes in developing and managing sustainability initiatives and cross-sector partnerships that address environmental and resource challenges. Previously, she worked at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, focusing on air quality modeling. Her work today focuses on using universities as platforms for sustainability innovation, applied research, and real-world implementation. Jasleen also serves on the board of Audubon Dallas, where she supports conservation and sustainability initiatives in the North Texas region.



Jasleen Dhillon

Guest Speakers

June Park, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Arlington, where he leads research on smart and sustainable building systems. Dr. Park focuses on leveraging AI and sensor data to optimize building performance. He has published 80+ papers and secured \$1.8 million in research grants. He is the recipient of the International Building Performance Simulation Association's Emerging Contributor Award, recognizing his pioneering work in human-building interactions.



June Young Park

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.



Kathryn Guerra

Thank you for attending



Thank you for joining us at the North Texas Climate Symposium and for your commitment to advancing climate action in our community. We look forward to welcoming you back next year for our 10th Annual Symposium as we continue building momentum toward a more resilient Dallas. Stay connected with the latest initiatives from OEQS at DallasClimateAction.com, and together, we can continue shaping a stronger, more sustainable future for our city.

Contact Information



Phone
[\(214\) 670-1200](tel:(214)670-1200)



Website
www.dallasclimateaction.com



Email
deqs@dallasclimateaction.com

