

## **Biographies – Earth Day Symposium 2022 -**

**Ruth DeFries** is a professor of ecology and sustainable development at Columbia University in New York and co-founding dean of the Columbia Climate School. She uses images from satellites and field surveys to examine how the world's demands for food and other resources are changing land use throughout the tropics. Her research quantifies how these land use changes affect climate, biodiversity and other ecosystem services, as well as human development. DeFries was elected as a member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, one of the country's highest scientific honors, received a MacArthur "genius" award, and is the recipient of many other honors for her scientific research. In addition to over 100 scientific papers, she is committed to communicating the nuances and complexities of sustainable development to popular audiences through her books "The Big Ratchet: How Humanity Thrives in the Face of Natural Crisis" and "What Would Nature Do?: A Guide for Our Uncertain Times".

DeFries is committed to linking science with policy, for example through her involvement with the Environmental Defense Fund, Science for Nature and People, World Wildlife Fund, and reconciling conservation and development in central India.

**Michael B. Gerrard** is Andrew Sabin Professor of Professional Practice at Columbia Law School, where he teaches courses on environmental and energy law and founded and directs the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. He is also former Chair of the Faculty of Columbia University's Earth Institute. Before joining the Columbia faculty in January 2009, he was partner in charge of the New York office of Arnold & Porter; he is now Senior Counsel to the firm. He practiced environmental law in New York City full time from 1979 to 2008. He was the 2004-2005 chair of the American Bar Association's 10,000-member Section of Environment, Energy and Resources. He has also chaired the Executive Committee of the New York City Bar Association, and the Environmental Law Section of the New York State Bar Association.

Since 1986, Gerrard has written an environmental law column for the *New York Law Journal*. He is author or editor of thirteen books, two of which were named Best Law Book of the Year by the Association of American Publishers: *Environmental Law Practice Guide* (twelve volumes, 1992) and *Brownfields Law and Practice* (four volumes, 1998). Among his other books are *Global Climate Change and U.S. Law* (with Jody Freeman) (2d ed. 2014); *The Law of Clean Energy* (2011); *Climate Engineering and the Law: Governance and Liability for Solar Radiation Management and Carbon Dioxide Removal* (with Tracy Hester) (2018); and *Legal Pathways to Deep Decarbonization in the United States* (with John Dernbach) (2019).

**Ben Furnas** (Cornell '06) is a recognized expert in public policy, infrastructure, sustainability, energy, and municipal government. He serves as executive director of The 2030 Project: A Cornell Climate Initiative.

Furnas previously served 8 years in the New York City Mayor's Office, culminating as Director of the Mayor's Office of Climate and Sustainability. During his time in the Mayor's Office, he

worked collaboratively with partners inside and outside government to spearhead nation-leading initiatives to decarbonize the city's buildings, improve street safety, develop renewable energy, expand worker protections, embrace sustainable transportation, reduce the climate impact municipal operations, and advance environmental justice.

Major accomplishments include the passage of a landmark law restricting fossil fuel use in new buildings – the first-ever such law in a large four-season city; an agreement to power New York City government operations with 100% clean and renewable electricity catalyzing the development of two new transmission lines that will carry enough electricity to power 2.5 million homes with zero-carbon power; launching “Vision Zero” – a nation-leading street safety initiative to transform New York City's streets to be safer and more pleasant for walking, biking, and taking transit; a \$420 million investment in electric vehicles and charging infrastructure to electrify New York City's 30,000 municipal vehicles by 2030; and a \$4.6 billion investment towards decarbonizing municipal buildings and operations in America's largest city.

As executive director of The 2030 Project, Furnas works with Cornell faculty, staff, and students to accelerate large-scale solutions to climate change through collaboration with internal and external partners.

Furnas previously worked at the Center for American Progress, the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, Auburn Theological Seminary, and the New York City Office of the Public Advocate. He graduated magna cum laude from New York University School of Law (2012), and received his B.A. in Government and Economics from Cornell University (2006). He was born and raised in Ithaca, New York.

**Rebecca Isacowitz** is the Deputy Chief of Staff at the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE). She comes with over a decade of private sector, nonprofit, and government experience in the energy efficiency and renewable energy sector. She previously served as Deputy Secretary for Energy & Environment with the Executive Chamber for the State of New York, where she supported the tactical development and operationalization of the State's 14 energy and environmental agencies, and advanced Corporate Strategy initiatives with the New York Power Authority in a directorship role. Rebecca also served in various government roles for the City of New York, most recently as Deputy Assistant Commissioner for the Department of Citywide Administrative Services' Division of Energy Management. In that role she created and executed crosscutting projects to meet citywide targets for greenhouse gas emissions across 80+ city agency partners in 250M+ sq. ft. While with the City Parks Department she wrote and implemented energy, climate, resiliency, and emergency action plans for vulnerable areas across New York City, post Superstorm Sandy. Prior to her time in government, she held various positions as a Sustainability and Energy Consultant, Analyst in the Wind Industry, and worked for the National Audubon Society.

Rebecca holds a Master's Certificate in Environmental Policy and Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Spanish from Lehigh University.

**Noah Shaw** is a partner in the energy and climate practice of Foley Hoag, where he is engaged in nearly every aspect of the renewable energy sector and climate economy. Noah works on offshore wind, electricity transmission issues, solar development, storage regulatory policy, efficiency financing models, carbon offset arrangements and more. He concentrates his practice on New York and federal matters, from start-ups through the largest renewable energy companies in the world, and from development through M&A and supporting financings.

From 2014 through 2019, Noah was General Counsel and Secretary of the Board of Directors at the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, which many of you know as NYSERDA. In that role, Noah was a senior member of New York State's energy team and guided policy formation and design of program structures related to, among other policies we now think of as the foundation of New York's energy and climate policy: the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act; the Clean Energy Standard; the offshore wind program, including leading all legal and regulatory work concerning the state's Master Plan, contract design and negotiation of the first two awarded project contracts; the large-scale renewable energy credit program; the NY Green Bank; the NY-Sun solar program; and regulatory frameworks for electric vehicles, energy storage, building efficiency and related initiatives.

Before joining NYSERDA, Noah was a Senior Advisor to the General Counsel at the U.S. Department of Energy, where he provided legal counsel to the Office of the Secretary and program offices and worked on interagency basis with the Securities and Exchange Commission, Internal Revenue Service, Treasury Department Office of Tax Policy, Domestic Policy Council, Council on Environmental Quality, congressional staff members and others.

**Carl R. Howard** has been an enforcement attorney with the US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2, since 1985. He has extensive expertise in alphabet soup: RCRA, TSCA, EPCRA and CERCLA in particular. Since 1986 he has volunteered with the NYS Bar Association including as Chair of the Environmental & Energy Law Section. He was a co-chair of the Adirondacks, Catskills and Forest Preserve Committee (and is an Adirondack winter 46er and a Catskills 35er), and is currently a co-chair of the Global Climate Change Committee and writes the Climate Change Blog (you are welcome to join the free distribution list by sending your email address to [crhoward@optonline.net](mailto:crhoward@optonline.net)). Carl got his J.D. from Hofstra University School of Law in 1986, and his B.A. from Middlebury College in 1981.