FOMB Winter Speaker Programs-Bios & Summaries 2026-2027

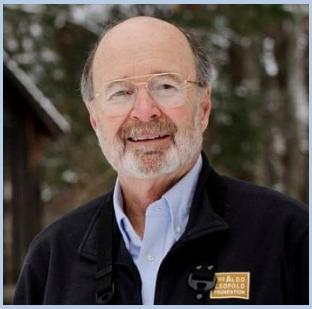
All talks 7:00pm on 2nd Wednesday of each month, October-May

Check www.fomb.org home page prior to each presentation for log in link details.

October 14, 2026

Aldo Leopold & "The Oldest Task in Human History"

Stan Temple, Professor Emeritus of Conservation, U. of Wisconsin, Madison, Science Advisor to the Aldo Leopold Foundation Board


Stan Temple

Dr. Stan Temple is the Beers-Bascom Professor Emeritus in Conservation in the Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For 32 years he held the academic position once occupied by Aldo Leopold, and during that time he won every teaching award for which he was eligible. Temple and his students have helped save many of the world's endangered species and the habitats on which they depend. Stan is currently a Senior Fellow with the Aldo Leopold Foundation, where he leads crane tours and introduces Future Leaders Fellows to Leopold's history, phenology, and wildlife ecology. He has also been a core contributor to the yearly Wisconsin Phenology Calendar and has received conservation awards from the Society for Conservation Biology, The Wildlife Society, and Wisconsin Society for Ornithology. Stan is a Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters. He has been President of the Society for Conservation Biology and Chairman of the Board of The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin and was inducted into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame in 2020.

Aldo Leopold identified "the oldest task in human history" as how "to live on a piece of land without spoiling it." For owners of private land Leopold knew there are many obstacles, among them: Maximizing economic returns from one's land, exercising the privilege to do whatever one wants with private property, feeling no obligation to act in the public's interest, suffering no consequences for abusing land, and simply being ignorant and unaware of how one's activities affect land. Leopold struggled throughout his career with how to overcome such obstacles. What would it take to induce land owners to practice conservation in the face of inclinations to do otherwise? He observed: "We seem ultimately always thrown back on individual ethics as the basis of land conservation. It is hard to make a man, by pressure of law or money, do a thing which does not spring naturally from his own personal sense of right and wrong." This line of thinking ultimately led Leopold to his most enduring contribution: his land ethic. Professor Stan Temple will discuss the evolution of Leopold's land ethic and why it remains so relevant to the challenge of living on Planet earth without spoiling it.

November 11, 2026

Strata: Stories from Deep Time

Laura Poppick, Author, Science & Environmental Journalist

Laura Poppick

Laura Poppick is a science and environmental journalist based in Portland, Maine. Her stories have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Scientific American*, *Wired*, *Audubon*, *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian* and elsewhere. *Strata*, her debut book, has been shortlisted for the PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, and the Maine Literary Award for Nonfiction.

As we grapple with the environmental crises gripping Earth today, we can look to the deep geologic history of this planet to learn how Earth regained stability during past periods of upheaval. Join local journalist Laura Poppick for a discussion about the ancient stories we can read in Earth's geologic record, and the wisdom that those stories hold for our future. She will discuss her debut book, Strata: Stories from Deep Time, which delves into four transformative moments of change in deep time that made our lives here possible today.

December 09, 2026

Data Centers & EMF's-The Invisible Costs

Theodora Scarato, MSW, Director of Wireless & EMF Programs, Environmental Health Sciences

Theodora Scarato

Theodora Scarato has worked on environmental health policy related to cell towers, wireless and EMF for 15 years. She has co-authored several scientific papers , including a policy review "U.S. policy on wireless technologies and public health protection: regulatory gaps and proposed reforms, published in Frontiers on Public Health. This paper details the history of cell tower and wireless network regulation in the US, the heavy industry influence and current deficiencies and

loopholes, such as the lack of pre-market safety testing, oversight, and monitoring programs. Theodora also co-authored another recent paper entitled Flora and fauna—How nonhuman species interact with natural and man-made EMF at ecosystem levels and public policy recommendations which documents how all nations, including the US, are focused almost exclusively on protecting humans, while ignoring nonhuman species and their habitats. The paper details needed regulatory reforms that explicitly consider wildlife and ecosystem health.

Scarato's work was pivotal in the landmark 2021 federal case against the FCC regarding its outdated cell tower and wireless radiation guidelines, in which the court mandated the agency explain how its 30-year old human exposure guidelines were adequate. In addition to her work at Environmental Health Sciences, she also serves as a Special Expert to the International Commission on the Biological Effects of Electromagnetic Fields (ICBE-EMF), a multi-disciplinary international consortium of scientists, doctors and researchers with expertise in the biological and health effects of non-ionizing electromagnetic fields.

As AI-driven technologies proliferate and the wireless and electrical grid infrastructure needed to support them grows, environmental EMF exposures are escalating. Scarato's presentation will provide an overview of current research on EMFs, highlighting recent studies related to human health and wildlife, including bees and bats. She will examine critical regulatory and policy issues, including federal and state oversight of wireless and electrical infrastructure, the deficiencies of current exposure guidelines, and the challenges communities face in ensuring adequate environmental review of infrastructure projects. Scarato will also discuss the rapid growth of data centers and the lack of regulations for the unique EMF exposures the facilities are creating.

Environmental Health Sciences (EHS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing science-based safeguards that prioritize public health and environmental protection. Through education, outreach, and strategic campaigns, EHS educates the public and policymakers in order to advance policies that reduce harmful environmental exposures, covering everything from plastics and forever chemicals to air pollution and EMFs. EHS also runs a science news platform with daily newsletters, Environmental Health News, translating key scientific studies and news.

January 13, 2027

Free the Andro!

Chip Spies, Founder & President, Free the Andro

Chip Spies

Chip Spies is the founder and president of the Free the Andro (FTA) Coalition made up of

individuals and several conservation groups including American Rivers, Maine Rivers, Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, Trout Unlimited, RESTORE: The North Woods and the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust. FTA is focused on understanding the hydro-dam licensing process conducted by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and how it will be used to relicense the Brunswick hydro-dam while strongly supporting improved migratory fish passage at the dam. Chip is a longtime resident of the Brunswick-Topsham area having lived here for 39 years and currently resides on Water Street in Brunswick which happens to be at the "head of tide" on the Androscoggin River. He holds a B.S. and an M.S. in forest sciences from the University of Maine, and an M.B.A. from Southern New Hampshire University.

Chip will discuss status of the Federal Energy Commission (FERC) relicensing process for the hydro-power facility at the Brunswick-Topsham dam as it relates to migratory fish passage. This head-of-tide dam is a well-documented barrier to the passage of American Shad, Alewives, Blueback Herring, Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lampreys, American Eels, and other species that require access to fresh water and marine habitats to complete their life cycles. A new FERC license will run for 30-50 years, making this process a once in a generation opportunity to help fix the dam problem that has damaged the river ecosystem for 200 years. The stakes are high. If fish passage is adequately restored the river will continue its trajectory of improvement since enactment of the Clean Water Act in 1972. A cleaner river with a diverse and healthy ecosystem will withstand climate change better than an impaired system. Now is the chance for communities of the Lower Androscoggin to make a positive difference for generations to come.

February 10, 2027

Restoring America's Perfect Tree: Bringing back the American Chestnut to Maine's Forest

Mark McCullough, Wildlife Biologist and Artist

Mark McCollough. Photo: Mark Ireland

Mark McCollough, Ph.D., has a long career as an endangered species biologist in Maine. He worked for U. Maine (4 years for the caribou reintroduction project), Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (13 years leading endangered and nongame wildlife programs) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (20 years in Federal endangered species policy and programs). In retirement he serves as president of the Maine Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation, is attempting to plant 10,000 trees, and learning to play bagpipes. He is working to restore the American chestnut before he hangs up his tree shovel. Mark is also an accomplished wildlife artist and has been awarded the Jay "Ding" Darling memorial award for Wildlife Stewardship through Art by the Wilderness Society. He painted the chickadee for Maine's longtime license plate, has many designs available on clothing through Liberty Graphics and has exhibited widely in galleries. Mark lives in Hampden Maine.

For the last 40 years, The American Chestnut Foundation has been committed to restoring

the American chestnut after it was tragically decimated by a fungal blight in the early 1900s. Mark McCollough, President of the Maine Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation will explain how a blight tolerant American chestnut is being developed and why this is essential to restoring the ecology and resilience of our eastern forest. Come to learn what is happening in Maine (literally in your backyards), to bring back the American chestnut.

March 10, 2027

They Poisoned the World: Life & Death in the Age of Forever Chemicals

Mariah Blake, Investigative Journalist &Author

Mariah Blake

Mariah Blake is an award-winning investigative journalist whose writing has appeared in *The New York Times, The Atlantic, Mother Jones, The New Republic, CJR, and* numerous other publications. She was a Murrey Marder Nieman Fellow in Watchdog Journalism at Harvard University. Her first story about forever chemicals, or PFAS, was published in 2015 and was a finalist for the National Magazine Award.

They Poisoned the World: Life & Death in the Age of Forever Chemicals; is a gripping investigation of the chemical industry's decades-long campaign to hide the dangers of forever chemicals, told through the story of a small town on the frontlines of an epic public health crisis.

In 2014, after losing several friends and relatives to cancer, an unassuming insurance underwriter in Hoosick Falls, New York, began to suspect the local water supply was polluted. When he tested his tap water, he discovered dangerous levels of forever chemicals. This set off a chain of events that led to 100 million Americans learning their drinking water was tainted. Although the discovery came as a shock to most, the U.S. government and the manufacturers of these toxic chemicals—used in everything from lipstick and cookware to children's clothing—had known about their hazards for decades.

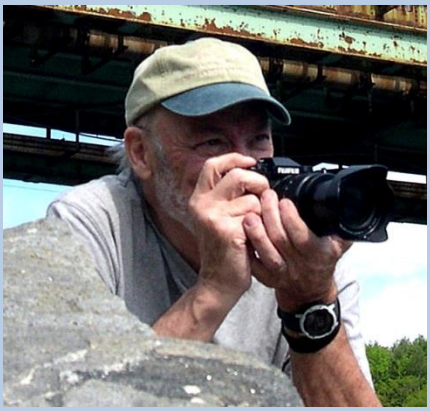
Join in a conversation with investigative journalist Mariah Blake as she tells the astonishing story of this cover-up, tracing its roots back to the Manhattan Project and through the postwar years, as industry scientists discovered that these chemicals refused to break down and were saturating the blood of virtually every human being. By the 1980s, manufacturers were secretly testing their workers and finding links to birth defects, cancer, and other serious diseases. At every step, the industry's deceptions were aided by our government's appallingly lax regulatory system—a system that has made us all guinea pigs in a vast, uncontrolled chemistry experiment.

Drawing on years of on-the-ground reporting and tens of thousands of documents, Blake interweaves the secret history of forever chemicals with the moving story of how a lone village took on the chemical giants—and won. From the beloved local doctor to the young mother who took her fight all the way to the nation's capital; citizen activists in Hoosick Falls and beyond have ignited the most powerful grassroots environmental movement since *Silent Spring*.

April 14, 2027

The Science of Biodiversity & Ecosystem Functions

John Lichter, Professor Emeritus of Biology & Environmental Studies, Bowdoin College



John Lichter

John Lichter, professor emeritus of biology and environmental studies at Bowdoin College began his ecosystem ecology research on coastal sand dunes bordering Lake Michigan where he studied the mechanisms of plant succession. Since then, he contributed to research investigating the effects of rising atmospheric CO2 on forest productivity and biogeochemical cycling with colleagues at Duke University. After coming to Bowdoin College in 2000, John began research on the ecology and environmental history of Merrymeeting Bay, which provides many engaging and important research topics for an ecologist. He is most interested in understanding the legacies of past human disturbance on the river-estuary complex and in providing information useful for the sound management and conservation of Maine's coastal ecosystems. To this end, John worked with Bowdoin students to reconstruct the history of the Merrymeeting Bay ecosystem and to understand the consequences of past and present human activity on it. One research paper he co-authored in 2001, "Limited Carbon Storage in Soil and Litter of Experimental Forest Plots under Increased Atmospheric CO_2," appeared in a 2001 issue of the prestigious journal *Nature* and was named one of the most influential articles in environmental science by Essential Science Indicators. John holds a BS from Northern Illinois University and a PhD from the University of Minnesota. He has been an active Friends of Merrymeeting Bay member for many years and a member of their Research & Advocacy Committee.

Research in Minnesota prairies over 30 years indicates biodiversity (# species) has a positive influence on ecosystem functioning. How might biodiversity influence the functioning of our river, estuary, and coastal ecosystems in mid-coast Maine? What steps can we take to guarantee functioning ecosystems for people living in our area in the future? We will learn how species diversity enhances ecosystem function and resilience, beginning with landmark studies in prairie plant communities and extending to Maine's forests, streams, estuaries and coastal environments; and we will examine how the concept of ecosystem resilience has evolved into

socioecological resilience, offering insights into how human and natural systems can thrive together amid ongoing environmental changes

May 12, 2027

Cooke Aquaculture on the Kennebec River

Ben Williamson, Executive Director, Animal Outlook

Ben Williamson

Ben Williamson is Executive Director of Animal Outlook, a national nonprofit challenging animal agribusiness through undercover investigations, legal advocacy, corporate and food system reform, and vegan outreach. He stepped into the role in late 2024, bringing more than a decade of experience across some of the world's leading animal protection organizations.

Originally from London, Ben began his advocacy career in 2012 in the press office at PETA UK, where he broke numerous investigative stories and developed deep expertise in media strategy and public communications. He later joined World Animal Protection, focusing on factory farming and wildlife exploitation, which deepened his understanding of how animal welfare connects to climate, public health, and social justice. Ben then joined Compassion in World Farming USA as Executive Director, where he oversaw the organization's campaigns, food business engagement, and operations.

At Animal Outlook, Ben leads a skilled team pursuing high-impact investigations, impact litigation, and the organization's Farm Transitions Program, which works with farmers to move away from animal agriculture toward plant-based alternatives. As a lead spokesperson, he has made numerous television appearances on NBC, CNN, Fox News, CBS, and Good Morning America, and has authored op-ed pieces in USA Today, Newsweek, the New York Daily News, the Independent, and more.

Cooke Inc. (also known as **Cooke Seafood** or **Cooke Aquaculture**) is a Canadian multinational seafood company based in New Brunswick, Canada. They are the largest privately held seafood company globally. Outside of its operations in the Maritimes, Cooke has operations in Washington, Scotland, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, British Columbia, Alaska, Spain and other locales including Maine where they are best known for their coastal open pen salmon aquaculture nets. Since its formation, Cooke Inc. has made approximately 100 acquisitions, 14 of which, since 2016, being major acquisitions worth $2.5 billion. As of 2023, Cooke employs nearly 13,000 people, including 2,500 in Atlantic Canada and 200-230 in Maine. The company operates in 14 countries and utilizes 800 vessels along with 30 processing plants, while using their own hatcheries and feed plants. Cooke currently makes annual revenues of CA$4 billion.

Open pen aquaculture creates many ecological problems including 1) genetic weakening of wild populations from interbreeding escapees, 2) introduction of diseases into the wild from high population density pen stocks and 3) creation of dead zones on the bottom and in the vicinity from concentrated nutrient and pharmaceutical wastes sinking out of the pens. Some coastal Maine communities have welcomed Cooke while others have kept them out. Cooke is currently defendant in a lawsuit brought by the Conservation Law Foundation alleging the company violated the Clean Water Act at its 13 active salmon pen sites in Maine. The suit claims the aquatic factory farms unlawfully discharge toxic sludge, uneaten food, and dead fish onto the seafloor, threatening traditional fisheries.

While open ocean aquaculture pens get most of the press, Cooke operates many onshore rearing facilities, some providing young fish for the ocean pens and some growing out their fish to market size. These land facilities also create many environmental problems with extremely high water usage and discharges into our rivers. In 2019, Animal Outlook released the first-ever undercover investigation of a U.S. fish farm, exposing shocking cruelty at Cooke Aquaculture's salmon hatchery in Bingham, Maine alongside the Kennebec River. Years later, when they returned to the same facility in 2025, they found that little had changed. While Maine DEP issues waste discharge permits to Cooke for discharging into Class A waters of the Kennebec, it is the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry that licenses aquaculture facilities in Maine.

Animal Outlook's undercover investigation of Cooke's in Bingham documented-

- **Systematic animal cruelty:** Workers continuing to club fish to death — sometimes unsuccessfully, leaving animals writhing in agony for extended periods. In one incident, a fish thrashed for 43 seconds after the initial blow.
- **Mocking accountability:** The Hatchery Manager openly discussed the 2019 investigation, admitting "we did a lot of stuff that we weren't supposed to do." He talked about throwing fish like a basketball and yelling "Kobe," boasting about how good he was.
- **Environmental violations:** Workers ignoring containment protocols, increasing the probability that hatchery fish will escape into waterways where they threaten wild salmon populations by spreading disease and competing for resources.
- **Contamination:** Workers planning to use fish feed contaminated by rodents, with one stating: "Technically, should we use that feed? No. But are we going to? Yes!"
- **Mass mortality events:** Barrels full of dead fish and workers casually discussing die-offs, including one incident where approximately 25,000 to 30,000 fish died in a single tank.
- **Failed oversight:** Despite carrying "Best Aquaculture Practices" certification, the facility operates with what workers describe as prioritization of production over animal welfare.

Join Ben Williamson tonight as he enlightens us on the world of animal ethics Animal Outlook works in and as he focuses in on their finding at Cooke Aquaculture upstream from Merrymeeting Bay on the upper Kennebec River.

The End

Thanks for Coming!