

Sitka Conservation Society

Board of Directors



Melissa Hamilton, Board President

Mother, Bookkeeper, Outdoorswoman: Melissa is a long-time Sitka resident. She and her children are outdoor enthusiasts and care about keeping the environment wild and pristine. Melissa works as the Finance Director at the Sitka Sound Science Center and brings her local knowledge and accounting experience to SCS. Melissa became board president in 2018.

Board member since 2015



Steve Fish, Board Vice-President

Steve has lived in Southeast Alaska since he trekked from California at the age of 19. He runs a longliner fishing boat and has been commercial fishing for over 35 years. Steve enjoys mountaineering, having fun with his wife and 3 kids, and being involved in the community. Steve is also board President of Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association, involved with Rotary and St. Peter's Church.

Board member since 2011



Debra Brushafer, Treasurer

Debra moved to Sitka AK in 1992. She has worked as a family practice physician since her arrival in Sitka. She is an avid outdoors person. She enjoys kayaking, hiking, camping, and boating to explore the beautiful Tongass with her family and friends. Her husband, children, and she regularly subsistence hunt, fish, and gather.

Board member since 2015



Mariah Leeseberg, Board Secretary

Mariah graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2005 and majored in Wildlife Ecology. She served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Madagascar. She has worked with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the US Geological Survey, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game. She currently works at Sitka National Historical Park. Mariah loves spending time with her family, especially on the water or roaming the Tongass.

Board member since 2015

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Marian Allen

Marian is a commercial fisher and an Alaska Marine Safety Education Association instructor. She's a 31 year Alaskan and is currently an English teacher.

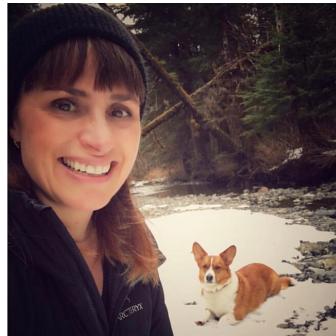
Board member since 2006



Ben Clark

Ben grew up in rural Ohio and after college, his love for mountains pulled him west. Eventually, he found his way up to Sitka as an AmeriCorps member. After his year of service, he was determined to stay in Sitka and continue to pursue his passion for education. Ben currently teaches at Sitka High School and spends his free time exploring the wonderful Tongass with his wife and energetic border collie.

Board member since 2018



Mary-Alice Henry

Alaska became Mary-Alice's home at the impressionable age of 19. She immediately fell in love with the old growth forests of Prince of Wales, though eventually Sitka became her permanent home. She is currently the Administrator of Mt. Edgecumbe High School. Her passion is preserving the last remaining old growth forests of SE Alaska. There is rarely a day she doesn't hit the trails with her best pal, Scout.

Board member since 2019



Judi Leman

Judi grew up on a lake and in the woods in Minnesota. At an early age she began fishing, picking blue berries, making maple syrup, eating local game, and running wild in the woods. After graduating from college Judi began a 25-year career in retail management. She raised two daughters and began ultra-cycling. She moved to Sitka to be closer to her family and wishes to preserve wild areas for her grandchildren and others.

Board member since 2012



Keith Nyitray

Keith grew up east of NYC and has a degree in Environmental Resources Management. He came to Alaska in 1979 to climb Denali and stayed. After adventuring around the state he settled in Sitka in 1998. He has lobbied in DC and presented on the need to protect the Tongass National Forest and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. He looks forward working with everyone at SCS to protect the land and the way of life he loves.

Board member since 2019

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Krystina Scheller

Krystina Scheller has a degree in Political Science and Economics from Drew University. In 2015, Krystina moved her family and her Arctic sailing business to Sitka via the Northwest Passage. Originally from Hawaii, Krystina has always had a close relationship with the land and water around her. Her passion for the environment and sustainable living has taken her to some of the most remote parts of the Northern Hemisphere including the Central Arctic Ocean, Northwest Greenland and Ellesmere Island.

Board member since 2019



Spencer Severson

Spencer is a commercial diver, carpenter, global sailor. He used to dive for herring roe in Prince William Sound until the Exxon Valdez spill ruined the fishery. But according to Spencer, "only the foolish indulge in despair." He says, "I've been blessed with an occupation and friends I love and a struggle we must win to save and protect the home we all love. Don't give up the fight."

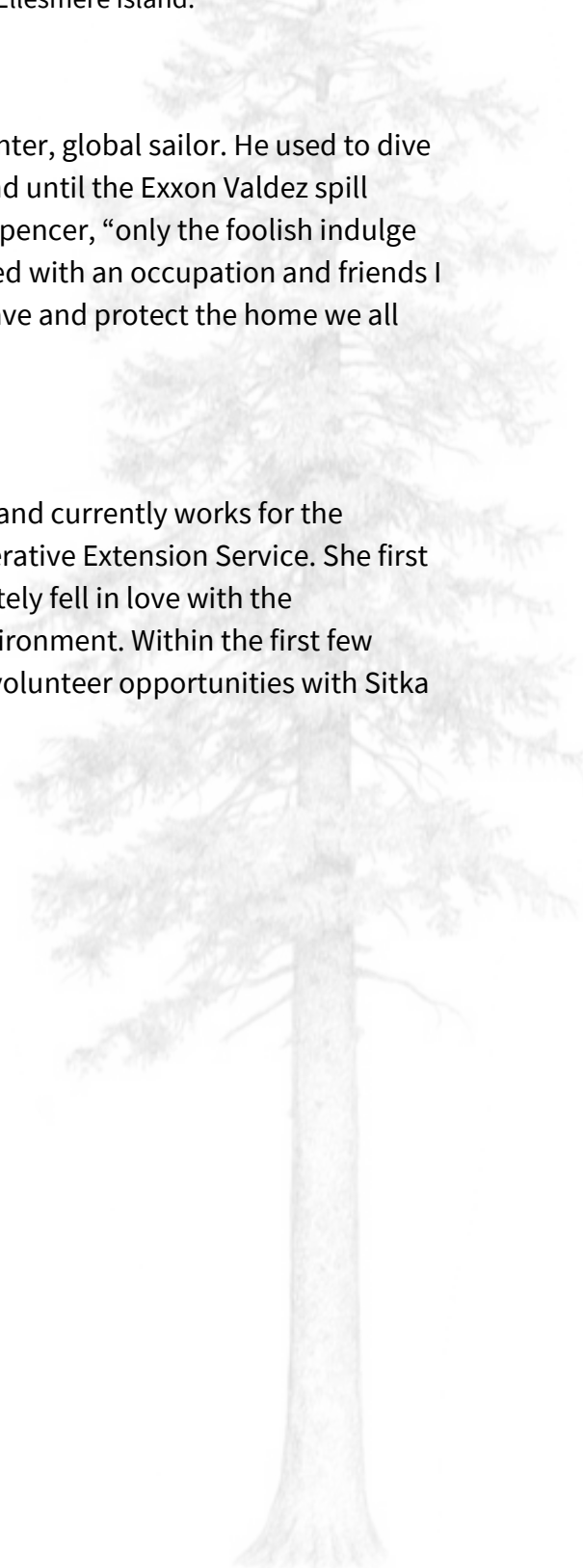
Board member since 2003



Jasmine Shaw

Jasmine grew up in Long Beach, CA, and currently works for the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service. She first arrived in Sitka in 2010 and immediately fell in love with the community and the surrounding environment. Within the first few weeks of her arrival, she sought out volunteer opportunities with Sitka Conservation Society.

Board member since 2013



Sitka Conservation Society

Staff



Andrew Thoms, Executive Director

Andrew has an undergraduate degree in Environmental Sciences and an MS in Sustainable Development and Conservation Biology. Before coming to Sitka, he spent 10 years working in International Development in Latin America. He became specialized in communities that live on the peripheries of protected areas and brings a vision of sustainable social and economic growth compatible with protection of the surrounding natural ecosystem.



Heather Bauscher, Tongass Forest Organizer

Heather has a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts in Geography/Environmental Studies and Fine Arts – Painting and Drawing. She also has a Masters of Teaching and has worked as a deckhand, student teacher, wildlife specialist for the USDA, and most recently as an activist advocating for increased salmon habitat protection measures. Heather enjoys hunting, fishing, sailing, painting, and motivating community members to partake in the public process!



Bethany Goodrich, Communications Director

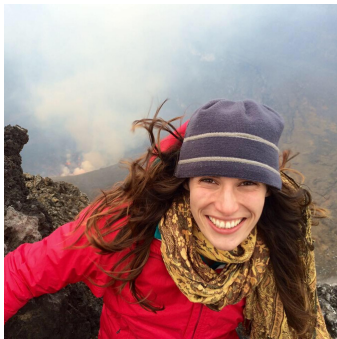
Bethany returned to SCS after graduating from a Master's program at Oxford University in Biodiversity, Conservation and Management. She first worked for SCS in 2012 as an ACF Communications and Story-telling intern. Her position works with the Sustainable Southeast Network to create communications and story-telling products that influence and change policy related to Natural Resource management. She is an avid hiker, subsistence harvester and outdoors woman.



Clarice Johnson, Office Manager

Clarice was born and raised in Sitka and is a Tlingit Alaskan Native. She brings a unique perspective to the organization along with keen insights on how to effectively broaden the conservation ethic amongst diverse regional interest groups. Clarice takes care of SCS bookkeeping, membership, strategic outreach, and many other important functions.

Sitka Conservation Society Staff



Chandler O'Connell, Sitka Community Sustainability Catalyst

Chandler was born and raised in Sitka. She grew up in a fishing family before leaving Sitka to attend Harvard University. She pursued a degree in Human Ecology, and she spent a summer as an intern for SCS. Following graduation, Chandler spent over 5 years working on development projects with the One-Acre Fund in Rwanda. She came back to Sitka to put her knowledge and experience to work in her home town and develop sustainable communities here in Alaska.



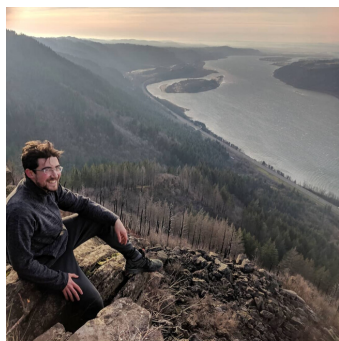
Katie Riley, Policy Engagement Coordinator

Katie Riley was born and raised in Sitka, graduating from Mt Edgecumbe High School in 2011. She has worked in the seafood industry for seven years, for the past five on a troll tender. After receiving a Masters in International Relations and Italian from the University of St Andrews in Scotland, Katie traveled to Madagascar to work in reef conservation. Katie began working for SCS to research policy and develop sustainable solutions to manage the forest she calls home.



Emily Pound, 4-H Coordinator

Emily grew up in the Green Mountains of Stowe, Vermont. She graduated from American University with a degree in Law & Society, and moved to Sitka as a Jesuit Volunteer at Sitkans Against Family Violence. She developed a deep gratitude for Sitka through trail running, wild food harvesting, and observing how the Tongass breathes life into the community. She is pursuing a degree in Environmental Justice through Vermont Law School. She is excited to work with the 4-H program.



Ryan Morse, Communications and Outreach Coordinator

Ryan Morse is from Sitka, Alaska, and has a strong interest in design, art, the great outdoors, travel, and making the world a better place. He graduated with degrees in Graphic Design and German from Portland State University. Since 2014, Ryan has been the graphic designer and project manager behind the SCS annual calendar. He is excited to be back in Sitka and to leverage his creative problem-solving skills for conservation and sustainable development work on the Tongass!



Ellie Handler, Roadless Rule Specialist

Ellie grew up outside of New Haven, Connecticut and studied Ecology at Yale University. She moved to Sitka to work as the Public Lands Communications Fellow with SCS and the Forest Service in 2018. She is fascinated by salmon's role in tying together the Pacific and the Tongass and has been thrilled to work on protecting salmon habitat. Ellie loves to hike and learn about intertidal critters.

Fellows and Interns:



Jill Hayden, Living with the Land and Community J.V.

Jill was raised in a small town in the mountains of Pennsylvania. She graduated from the University of Delaware with a degree in Marine Science. Immediately following graduation, Jill headed to the Florida Keys to be a Marine Science Educator for the Pigeon Key Foundation. Jill is thrilled to work with 4-H at SCS. She is excited to explore a vibrant coastal locale, while learning to better understand and meet the needs of both the people and the land.



Carolyn Rice, Public Lands Communications Fellow

Carolyn graduated from Stanford University with a master's degree in environmental communication and a bachelor's in environmental science. She is excited to work as an Alaska Fellow with the Sitka Conservation Society and the Forest Service to publicize the hard work that goes into managing the Tongass — and how awesome it is. Carolyn feels at home in kitchens, under the stars, and when her feet are dirty. She loves to make sourdough bread, write poetry, and watch sunsets.

