

PLT 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



**ROOTS FOR
THE FUTURE**

MARCH 23-26
LIED LODGE AT
ARBOR DAY FARM, NEBRASKA

WELCOME TO ARBOR DAY FARM




We are thrilled to have you join us at the 2026 Project Learning Tree (PLT) Annual Conference to celebrate 50 years of PLT, at the beautiful Arbor Day Farm in Nebraska.

Since 1976, PLT has helped students understand how their decisions and actions impact the environment by teaching how to think, not what to think. And over the past 50 years, PLT and our incredible network of State Coordinators, Facilitators, educators, and partners, have trained more than 700,000 educators and reached approximately 150 million students, transforming how youth understand and engage with the natural world. Together, we are equipping the next generation with the critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary to tackle complex environmental issues for the next 50 years.

Because of this important work, we were so excited to integrate PLT into the Sustainable Forestry Initiative in 2017. Building the next generation of informed leaders and decision-makers is one of the best investments we can make. Fifty years of PLT is a huge accomplishment, but this milestone isn't just about looking back – it's about planting seeds for the next 50 years. Together we will continue expanding our reach, impacting more educators and students through nature-based education resources, professional development opportunities, and career tools and programs.

We know it takes significant effort for you to join us each year for the PLT Conference, and we are especially grateful to share this 50th anniversary celebration with you. Our collective future and a sustainable society depend on young people who have not yet had access to the learning opportunities they need. The PLT network plays a critical role in closing that gap; building the knowledge, skills, confidence, and pathways youth need to thrive. Thank you for being here and supporting the investment in our young people and the future of our forests.


Kathy Abusow
President and CEO


Nadine Block
Senior, VP, Network Initiatives

THANK YOU SPONSORS

FOREST LEVEL



STAND LEVEL



TREE LEVEL

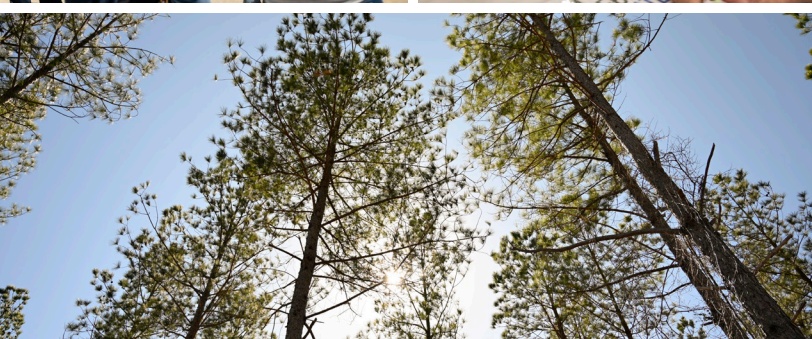
 **Manulife** Investment Management



CONFERENCE APP

Download the Conference App

For the most up-to-date agenda, detailed session descriptions, and speaker bios.



MONDAY | MARCH 23, 2026

8:00AM - 12:30PM

Registration Open

9:00AM - 10:00AM **Hospitality Suite**

Conference Buddy Breakfast

For Conference Buddy Program participants only

10:00AM - 11:00AM

PLT COORDINATOR REGIONAL BREAKOUT MEETINGS

For PLT State Coordinators only

Northeast/Mid-Atlantic: Rosenow A | Northwest: Rosenow B
Southeast: Rosenow C | Midwest/Southwest: Rosenow D

12:00PM - 1:00PM

Steinhart A, B, C

Networking Lunch

1:00PM - 2:45PM

Steinhart A, B, C

GENERAL SESSION

INDIGENOUS WELCOME

Courtney Chavez, Chief Executive Director of Tribal Affairs,
Ponca Tribe of Nebraska

WELCOME & KEYNOTE: CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF IMPACT AND GROWING INTO THE FUTURE

- Kathy Abusow, President & CEO, SFI
- Dan Lambe, CEO, Arbor Day Foundation, SFI Board Chair

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE OF PLT THROUGH NEW AUDIENCES

MODERATOR: Ana Leirner, Senior Director, Professional Development and PLT Products, SFI

- Jonathan Smith, MS PLT Coordinator, Education and Outreach Coordinator, Mississippi Forestry Association
- Jaquie Parker, AL PLT Coordinator, Education Coordinator, Alabama Forestry Foundation
- Nicole Filizetti, WI PLT Coordinator, LEAF UW Stevens Point

2:45PM - 3:15PM

Networking Break

3:15PM - 4:15PM

PLT COORDINATOR DELIVERY PARTNER ORGANIZATION BREAKOUT MEETINGS

For PLT State Coordinators only

Forestry Associations: Rosenow A | Non-Profit/NAAEE Affiliates: Rosenow B | Government Agencies: Rosenow C | Academia: Rosenow D

6:30PM - 8:30PM

Steinhart Lodge

Welcome Dinner at Steinhart Lodge

HOSPITALITY SUITE MONDAY-THURSDAY FROM 8:30PM -11:00PM





TUESDAY | MARCH 24, 2026

8:00AM - 8:50PM **Steinhart A, B, C**
Networking Breakfast

9:00AM - 10:30AM **Steinhart A, B, C**
GENERAL SESSION

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE FUTURE: ATTRACTING SUSTAINED SUPPORT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

MODERATOR: Melissa Taggart, Senior Director, PLT Development and Strategy, SFI

- Rob Beadel, AR PLT Coordinator, Director of Forestry Education, Arkansas Forestry Association
- Judy Braus, Executive Director, North American Association for Environmental Education
- Amtchat Edwards, Acting Assistant Director, Partnerships, USDA Forest Service
- Rocco Saracina, Director of PLT Partnerships, SFI

10:30AM - 11:00AM **Rosenow D**
Networking Break and Silent Auction Opening

11:00AM - 12:00PM
CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Rosenow A

ENGAGING SPANISH-SPEAKING LEARNERS WITH PLT

- Brekke Bounds, IL PLT Coordinator, Executive Director, Environmental Education Association of Illinois
- Cecilia Ochoa Blackaller, MX PLT Coordinator, Protección de la Fauna Mexicana A.C.
- Jaclyn Stallard, PLT Curriculum Advisor, SFI

Rosenow C

CONNECTING PLT TOGETHER FOR BIRDS WITH LEAVE NO TRACE

- Christine Ticehurst, PA PLT Co-Coordinator, Recreation & Interpretation Program Coordinator, PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

Rosenow D

GROWING ROOTS AND PLANTING SEEDS – NAVIGATING LEADERSHIP, LEARNING, AND TRANSITION IN PLT COORDINATION

- Emily Blum, FL PLT Coordinator/Education Training Specialist II, UF/IFAS School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences
- Mary Westlund, Manager, PLT Education Systems, SFI

12:00PM - 1:30PM **Steinhart A, B, C**
PLT Awards Luncheon



1:45PM - 3:45PM
CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Rosenow A

NEW COMMUNICATION AND WORKSHOP STRATEGIES USING A COMMUNITY BUILDING FRAMEWORK

- Emma Dill, Educational Adviser, Fundación Ibañez Atkinson
- Tamara Arce, Naturaleza Educa Coordinator, Fundación Ibañez Atkinson
- Francisco López, PLT Facilitator, Fundación Ibañez Atkinson

Rosenow D

ONLY YOU CAN USE PLT TO TEACH FIRE PREVENTION

- Beth Hill, ND PLT Coordinator, Outreach and Education Manager, North Dakota Forest Service
- Yasmeen Hossain, OR PLT Co-Coordinator, Associate Director, ONREP (Virtual Guest)

Rosenow C

SHARPEN YOUR PENCILS! PLT SCHOOL DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT

- Ashley Hoffman, KY PLT Coordinator, Executive Director, Kentucky Association for Environ. Education
- Tony Pascall, OK PLT Coordinator, Education Coordinator, Oklahoma Forestry Services

3:45PM - 4:00PM
Networking Break

4:00PM - 5:00PM
CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Rosenow C

LISTENING FIRST: BUILDING TRUST ACROSS CULTURES — LESSONS FROM PARTNERSHIP WITH YAKAMA NATION AND PEI

- Megan Rivard, WA PLT Coordinator, Associate Director, Pacific Education Institute
- Tia Beavert, Tribal Forest Manager, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation

Rosenow D

DESIGNING ENGAGING TEACHER TOURS: PLT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE

- Jennifer Scarinza, Coordinator, NH PLT

Rosenow A

DELIVER PLT THROUGH A NEW LENS WITH NAAEE

- Emily Van Lann, Manager, Discover the Forest, NAAEE
- Bora Simmons, Director, National Project for Excellence in EE

6:30PM - 8:30PM **Steinhart A, B, C**
Casual Dinner at the Lied Lodge



WEDNESDAY | MARCH 25, 2026

8:00AM - 8:50AM **Steinhart A, B, C**
Networking Breakfast

9:00AM - 12:00PM **Meet in Main Lobby by Registration**
FIELD EXPERIENCE: PLT THROUGH OUTDOOR RECREATION EXPERIENCES

ATTENDEES ARE DIVIDED INTO GROUPS AND ROTATE THROUGH TWO OF THE FOUR STATIONS (75-MINUTES PER STATION)

STATION 1: ELEVATING AND CONTEXTUALIZING OUTDOOR ADVENTURES THROUGH PLT

Speakers: *Tim Grayson, UT PLT Coordinator, Wasatch Mountain Institute; Beth Hill, ND PLT Coordinator, North Dakota Forest Service*

STATION 2: GRATITUDE WALK WITH THE TREES

Speakers: *Molly Gillespie, AK PLT Coordinator, Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District; Danielle Ardrey, CO PLT Co-Coordinator, Colorado State Forest Service*

STATION 3: THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX FOR GREEN CAREERS

Speakers: *Rob Beadel, AR PLT Coordinator, Arkansas Forestry Association; Heather Sheets, OH PLT Coordinator, Ohio Division of Forestry*

STATION 4: ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS

Speakers: *Dayna Berry, Programs Manager, Tree Campus, Arbor Day Foundation; Jaclyn Stallard, PLT Curriculum Advisor, SFI*

12:00PM - 12:45PM **Tree Adventure Pavilion**
Lunch in the Field

1:00PM - 4:15PM
FIELD EXPERIENCE: PLT THROUGH OUTDOOR RECREATION EXPERIENCES

THE GROUPS ROTATE THROUGH THE OTHER TWO OF THE FOUR STATIONS LISTED ABOVE

4:15PM - 5:00PM **Steinhart A, B, C**
FIELD EXPERIENCE REFLECTION & HOT BEVERAGES

6:30PM - 8:30PM **Steinhart Lodge**
Celebrating the Future of PLT – Dinner Party



ASHLEY HOFFMAN (CO-CHAIR)
KY ASSOCIATION FOR EE



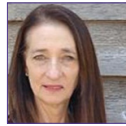
LAURA SIX, PH.D. (CO-CHAIR)
WEYERHAEUSER



DANIEL BENAVIDEZ
DDSK GROUP, LLC



HEATHER BERKLUND
WISCONSIN DNR



BARBARA BOLER
LANGDALE WOODLANDS



ASIA DOWTIN, PH.D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



JOE HEIMLICH, PH.D.
COSI CENTRE FOR RESEARCH & EVALUATION (RETIRED)



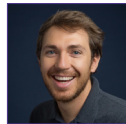
LARISSA HARRIS-JUIP
MICHIGAN TECH



JESSICA IRELAND
NORTH CAROLINA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION



ANDREA KANE, PH.D.
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA



TONY PASCALL (COOR. REP.)
OKLAHOMA FORESTRY SERVICES



SHAUNA POTOCKY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



MICHELLE SAULNIER
ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION





THURSDAY | MARCH 26, 2026

8:00AM - 8:50AM **Steinhart A, B, C**
Networking Breakfast

9:00AM - 10:30AM **Steinhart A, B, C**
GENERAL SESSION

EXPANDING CAREER HORIZONS IN FOREST AND CONSERVATION SECTORS

MODERATOR: Dominic “Nic” Weeks, Career Readiness Manager, SFI

- Sharon Jean-Philippe, Professor of Urban Forestry, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
- Tia Beavert, Tribal Forest Manager, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Tara Costanzo, Outreach and Education Lead, International Society of Arboriculture
- Caitlin Salaverria, President, International Corrugated Packaging Foundation

Steinhart D

10:30AM - 11:00AM
Networking Break and Silent Auction Closing

11:00AM - 12:00PM
CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Rosenow C

BUILDING ON STRENGTH TO GROW PLT STATE PROGRAMS

- Andrea Stay, MI PLT Coordinator, Michigan DNR
- Jack Hilgert, Statewide Environmental Education Coordinator, Oklahoma State Forest
- Jaclyn Stallard, PLT Curriculum Advisor, SFI

Rosenow D

EXPANDING OUR FACILITATOR ROOTS

- John Bello, AZ PLT Coordinator, Assistant Director, Deer Valley Petroglyph Preserve
- Timara Crichlow, Urban and Community Forestry Specialist, Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management

Rosenow A

IMPROVING NONFORMAL EDUCATOR PD WITH UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

- Lesley Newman, VA PLT Coordinator, Virginia Department of Forestry
- Katie Tennant, Education Director, Northern Virginia 4-H Center

12:00PM - 1:00PM **Steinhart A, B, C**
Networking Lunch

1:15PM - 3:15PM
GENERAL SESSION
TAKE IT OUTSIDE: FESTIVAL OF PLT ACTIVITIES

6:30PM - 8:30PM
Bonfire and Pizza Dinner

THANK YOU PLT 50TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE 25 +
PLT COORDINATORS AND PARTNERS WHO ACTIVELY
PARTICIPATED IN THE CONFERENCE PLANNING
COMMITTEES:

Danielle Ardrey (CO PLT), Rob Beadel (AR PLT), John Bello (AZ PLT), Dayna Berry (Arbor Day Foundation), Stacy Blomquist (LA PLT), Lexi Brown (MT PLT), Colleen Campion (PA PLT), Laura Downey (KA PLT), Nicole Filizetti (WI PLT), Molly Gillespie (AK PLT), Tim Grayson (UT PLT), Joe Heimlich (PLT EOC Member, Retired), Beth Hill (ND PLT), Jack Hilgert (OK State Forest), Ashley Hoffman (KY PLT), Beth Merow (CT PLT), Chip Murrow (IA PLT), Lesley Newman (VA PLT), Cecilia Ochoa (Mexico PLT), Tony Pascall (OK PLT), Michelle Saulnier (Arbor Day Foundation), Heather Sheets (OH PLT), Andrea Stay (MI PLT), Renee Strnad (NC PLT), Christine Ticehurst (PA PLT), Brittany Wray (KY PLT), and Chelsea York (GA PLT).

CHEERS TO 50 MORE YEARS!



plt.org | PLT@forests.org

2121 K Street NW
Suite 750
Washington, DC 20037

Phone: 202-765-3641



50 YEARS FORWARD: GROWING THE NEXT GENERATION

THE OPPORTUNITY BEFORE US

In 2026, PLT celebrates a remarkable milestone: 50 years of award-winning environmental education that has transformed how young people understand and care for the natural world. Through hands-on activities brought to life by PLT Coordinators, Facilitators, and educators nationwide, PLT has cultivated generations of environmental problem-solvers and stewards.

Now, to build on this legacy and expand our impact for future generations, we're launching **50 Years Forward: Growing the Next Generation**—a transformative \$5 million, five-year investment campaign to strengthen environmental education across the country, enhance sustainability career pathways and build forest literacy in communities across the country.

INVESTING IN A HEALTHIER, MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

50 Years Forward positions PLT to reach new communities, cultivate education champions, and deliver environmental education at scale, resulting in transformative change that benefits people and planet.

LEARN MORE:

plt.org/50forward

