Speaker Bios


Jonathan Overpeck ("Peck") is a climate scientist and founding co-director of the University of Arizona’s Institute of the Environment, where he is a Thomas R. Brown Distinguished Professor, and also a Regents Professor of Geosciences and Atmospheric Sciences. He received an AB from Hamilton College, as well as a MSc and PhD from Brown University. Peck has held positions at Columbia University (joint with NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies) and NOAA; at NOAA he led the founding of the NOAA Paleoclimatology Program and the World Data Center for Paleoclimatology. Peck has written over 180 papers on climate and the environmental sciences, and served as a Coordinating Lead Author for the Nobel Prize winning IPCC 4th Assessment (2007), and also as a Lead Author for the IPCC 5th Assessment (2014). Other awards include the US Dept. of Commerce Gold Medal, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Walter Orr Roberts award of the American Meteorological Society, and the Quivira Coalition’s Radical Center Award for his climate work with rural ranchers and land managers. Peck has active climate research programs on five continents, loves trying to understand drought dynamics and risk the world over, and is also the lead investigator of CLIMAS and the SW Climate Science Center – two major programs focused on regional climate adaptation. He is a Fellow of AGU as well as the AAAS, and tweets about climate-related issues @TucsonPeck.

Dr. Kristen Averyt is the Associate Director for Science at the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) at the University of Colorado. She was formerly the Director of the NOAA Western Water Assessment, also based in Colorado. Kristen received her Ph.D. in Geological and Environmental Sciences from Stanford University. She has earned several awards and honors, including a Fulbright Fellowship to New Zealand (1998), and a NOAA Congressional Fellowship (2005), during which she worked in the US Senate. She is a non-resident Policy Fellow of the American Meteorological Society, and was a lead author on the recently released National Climate Assessment. As the staff scientist for Working Group I of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, she was one of the many scientists who receive the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. Her current research focuses on the interplay between climate mitigation and adaptation, including the energy-water nexus.

Gary Webb is a Professor in the Department of Public Administration at the University of North Texas. He is a core member of the Emergency Administration and Planning Program (EADP), which was established in 1983 as the nation’s first bachelor’s degree program in emergency management. Prior to joining UNT, he was a faculty member in the sociology department and the Center for the Study of Disasters and Extreme Events at Oklahoma State University, and he has also held research positions at the University of Delaware’s Disaster Research Center. His research on organizational preparedness for and response to disasters has been supported by various agencies, including the U.S. National Science
Foundation, and it has appeared in a variety of professional journals, including the International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters, International Journal of Emergency Management, Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, Environmental Hazards, Natural Hazards Review, and Rural Sociology. Most recently, he co-authored Introduction to Emergency Management (2012, CRC Press). He has been invited to share his expertise with international audiences in Denmark, France, South Korea, The Netherlands, and Turkey.

Daryl Slusher has been involved in Austin government and politics for more than three decades, first as a community organizer then as a journalist covering local issues from 1985 to 1995 – primarily at the weekly Austin Chronicle. Texas Monthly called him, “the best and most entertaining writer on local politics.” Slusher left the Chronicle at the end of 1995 to run for the Austin City Council. He won a close race and was reelected twice. Slusher did not run for a fourth term and left office in 2005. In 2007 Slusher was named Assistant Director for Environmental Affairs and Conservation at Austin Water, Austin’s publicly owned water utility. There he oversees a wide range of responsibilities including Water Conservation, Wildlands; intergovernmental relations, climate initiatives and the Public Information Office.

Ron Lane is a Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for the County of San Diego. He is the General Manager of the County’s Public Safety Group, working closely with the Sheriff’s Department, District Attorney’s Office, Probation Department, Office of Emergency Services, Citizen’s Law Enforcement Review Board, the Public Defender, Child Support and the Medical Examiner. Together, these departments provide critical public safety services to the citizens of San Diego County and have over 7,000 employees and an annual budget of over $1.6 billion. Prior to this assignment, Ron served as the Director of the County of San Diego’s Office of Emergency Services, and was the Director of the County’s Emergency Operations Center during the 2007 Firestorm, and the 2011 Countywide power outage. He has worked for the County of San Diego since 1989, and has served in the municipal courts, Chief Technology Office and Department of Child Support. He is also a retired Colonel of the United States Army Reserve. He has been mobilized and deployed to the Persian Gulf twice, in Desert Storm and for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Ron holds a Masters in Public Administration from San Diego State University, and is a recent graduate of the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.