

Steering Committee of BIPOC Leaders in Agroforestry

An aerial photograph of a terraced agroforestry plot. The top section features a large, dense green tree on the left and various flowering plants, including purple and orange blossoms, on the right. Below this, several rows of black plastic seedling trays are visible, each containing numerous small green seedlings. The plot is situated on a hillside with visible soil erosion and is bordered by a simple wire fence. The overall scene depicts a sustainable agricultural practice in a hilly, possibly arid, environment.

A message from Carbon180

There is [consensus](#) within the scientific community that intentionally incorporating trees, shrubs, and woody perennials into agricultural operations in ecologically appropriate ways is one of the best ways to increase carbon sequestration in land-based systems. Practices and systems that we recognize today as “agroforestry” — riparian buffers, windbreaks, alley cropping, silvopasture, and forest farming — are deeply rooted in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). Agroforestry has been stewarded by Indigenous communities for millennia, delivering myriad ecosystem benefits and increasing carbon sequestration outcomes across their land.

While agroforestry is not new, it has been gaining momentum in the US, with more funding flowing to the implementation of these systems through programs like the [Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities Grant Program](#) and federal conservation programs that got a \$19.5 billion boost from the [Inflation Reduction Act](#). We have also seen early versions of the [upcoming Farm Bill](#) include multiple proposals to bolster support for agroforestry, from expanding the reach and capacity of the National Agroforestry Center to piloting an Agroforestry Initiative under the Conservation Reserve Program.

As agroforestry continues to shine as a bright star in the land-based carbon removal field, it is imperative to ground policy developments and programs in the wisdom of communities who bear the brunt of the climate crisis while having done little to contribute to its cause and for policy proposals to reflect the varying and unique needs of those who have been historically underserved in this space — Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color (BIPOC) farmers, ranchers, and forest stewards. We have seen great movements in sustainable agriculture — from organic to regenerative agriculture — yet each has been [primarily white-led and white-serving](#). The agroforestry movement must be different. For agroforestry to reach its full climate mitigation potential, it must be accessible to and stewarded by the wide variety and diversity of land stewards across the country.

To that end, Carbon180 is convening a Steering Committee composed of BIPOC leaders in agroforestry from eight regions in the US to facilitate conversations and ideate on projects to uplift the leadership of historically underserved farmers, ranchers, and forest stewards in agroforestry, showcasing the many faces, places, and uses of these systems across the US.

The leadership already exists — we just need to elevate it. The work, perspectives, and relationships that arise from the Steering Committee will inform Carbon180’s policy development and advocacy efforts around agroforestry. Carbon180 will also work with members to raise funds to carry out the projects outlined by the committee. Our goal is to engage in this work thoughtfully, responsibly, and with reciprocity so that agroforestry may avoid the pitfalls of past movements and succeed as a star of equitable, just, and high-quality land-based carbon removal.

With gratitude and humility,

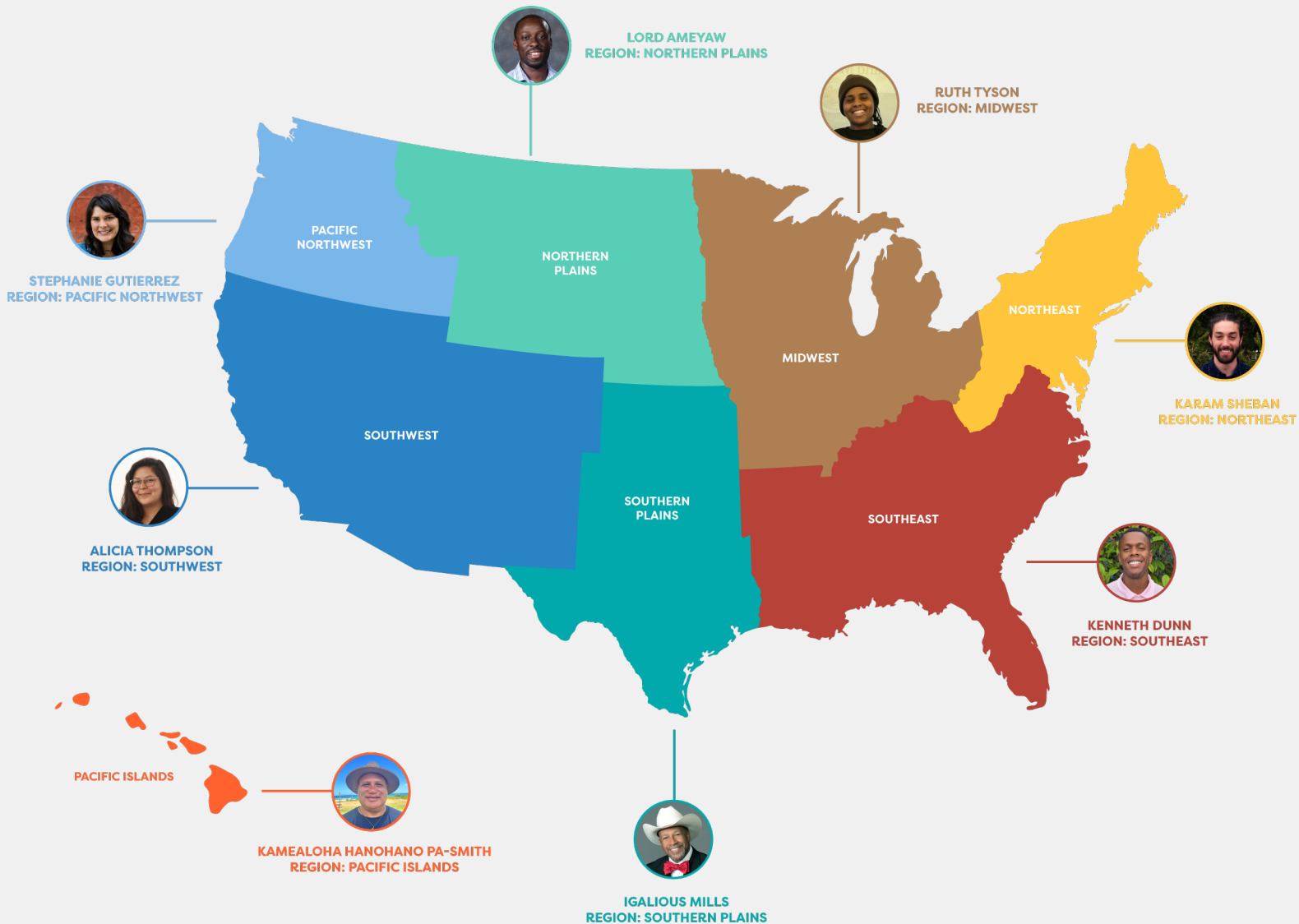


CRISTEL ZOEBSCH
DIRECTOR OF POLICY



ALAYNA CHUNEY, ESQ.
DIRECTOR

Steering Committee Snapshot



The Steering Committee will co-create a set of projects that uplift the leadership of historically underserved farmers, ranchers, and forest stewards in agroforestry. Together, the Steering Committee and Carbon180 will showcase the many uses, faces, and places of agroforestry systems in the US and explore the unique needs of BIPOC producers in implementing and sustaining these systems.

Regions adapted from the [US Global Change Research Program](#)

Steering Committee Members

Lord Ameyaw (he/him)

Region: Northern Plains

Lord is currently an assistant professor and lead faculty for the forestry program at the School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He is a forester and agroforester and has previously served as the National Agroforester, a collaborative position with USDA-NRCS and the [Nebraska Forest Service](#).

In this position, Lord served as the technical point person for all agroforestry matters, including agroforestry conservation practice standard oversight, Tribal relations, as well as agroforestry training and workshops. Lord is an avid quantitative and qualitative researcher with over a decade of experience in forestry/agroforestry teaching, research, and administration, both locally and internationally.



Aside from advancing community-led agroforestry, Lord is a soccer fanatic and science fiction lover, and originally hoped to become an astronaut!

Lord's vision for agroforestry

“Without community participation, agroforestry cannot thrive!”

Lord envisions cultivating a *“committed community of lifelong agroforestry advocates who actively support the committee’s goals, demonstrated through measurable indicators of success, and a sustained dedication to continued engagement beyond the committee’s initial term.”*

Steering Committee Members

Kenneth Dunn (he/him)

Region: Southeast

Kenneth works for a nonprofit called the [Center For Heirs' Property](#), working to clear the legal encumbrances associated with real estate property. There, his main focus is an issue known as heirs' property, where he works with underserved communities and assists them in getting what is known as "clear title".

After the legal issues are cleared, Kenneth solicits management techniques to generate revenue for landowners, one of those techniques being agroforestry.



Aside from advancing community-led agroforestry, Kenneth takes ballet lessons, is a boxer, and makes the best fried trout on the east coast!

Kenneth's vision for agroforestry

"Agroforestry is a perfect fit for minority landowners."

Kenneth envisions uplifting BIPOC voices in agroforestry through *"the formulation of inclusive and effective policy that addresses the needs of BIPOC communities — not just from a funding standpoint, but from a technical service one as well."*

Steering Committee Members

Stephanie Gutierrez (she/her)

Region: Pacific Northwest

Stephanie is a citizen of the San Carlos Apache Tribe and Forest and the Community Program Director at [Ecotrust](#). She leads a team of 4-6 experts on data science, co-production research, communications, and Tribal relations to advance Tribal forestry and land management.

Agroforestry intersects with her work as many Tribal forestry and Indigenous land management practices inform contemporary and western agroforestry systems and practices. She is the Principal Investigator for a federally funded research grant to build and support a network of Indigenous agroforestry practitioners in the Northwest, the [Indigenous Agroforestry Network](#).



Aside from advancing community-led agroforestry, Stephanie spends her time horseback riding, and teaching yoga, mindfulness, and meditation.

Stephanie's vision for agroforestry

“Community is a critical component of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and the application, adaptation, and evolution of land management practices. For Tribes and Indigenous groups, I hope that they see an increase in access to land, programs, and services to support their land management through agroforestry.”

Steering Committee Members

Kamealoha Hanohano Pa-Smith (he/him)

Region: Pacific Islands

Kamealoha currently serves as the Executive Director and Lead Kumu ‘Ike Hawai‘i (Teacher of Traditional Knowledge) at the [Hanalei River Heritage Foundation](#), based in Hanalei, Kaua‘i. He is fluent in Japanese, Hawaiian, English, and Hawaiian Creole English – utilizing his language and communication skills to create educational materials and facilitate workshops focused on native resource management, environmental stewardship, and food/climate resilience.

Additionally, he writes government grants and facilitates dialogue between the Native Hawaiian Community and various agencies. This aspect of his work is crucial as it enhances the relationship between the Native peoples of Hawai‘i and agencies operating within Hawai‘i and across the Pacific, creating opportunities for change and appropriate economic development to support native language, culture, and traditional practices revitalization efforts.



Aside from advancing community-led agroforestry, Kamealoha paddles outrigger canoes over vast oceans in and around Hawai‘i and has been conducting a Hawaiian sunrise ceremony with community & visitors for the past 15 years.

Kamealoha’s vision for agroforestry

“Agroforestry plays a crucial role in climate change mitigation and adaptation, especially from the perspective of a Native Hawaiian who is deeply connected to the land and its resources. I hope to see policy changes in Hawai‘i within the next five years that enable Native Peoples to have direct control over their ancestral lands. I believe that such changes will provide opportunities for both the Native peoples and the forests to heal. Connectivity to the ‘āina is key to healing our people and the land.”

Steering Committee Members

Igalious Mills (he/him)

Region: Southern Plains

Igalious has over 35+ years of working in economic development and nonprofit management. He also works with a nonprofit agriculture organization focusing on agriculture and forestry in rural-urban areas.

Currently, Igalious works alongside BIPOC farmers and ranchers to address renewable energy and sustainability for profitability, outreach, and technical assistance. He also provides independent consultant work on environmental justice issues with farmers, ranchers, and landowners.



Aside from advancing community-led agroforestry, Igalious is a former basketball player and spends his time planting flowers and painting.

Igalious' vision for agroforestry

"Agroforestry will play a critical role in climate change mitigation by planting more trees and plants across the globe."

Igalious envisions uplifting BIPOC leadership in agroforestry by "developing an action plan that will include agroforestry topics and providing a recommended roadmap to USDA as a reference for their programs."

Steering Committee Members

Karam Sheban (he/him)

Region: Northeast

Karam is a PhD student at the Yale School of the Environment studying agroforestry systems with a focus on forest farming systems in North America. Starting his third year in the program, he is also the Director of the [Northeast Forest Farmers Coalition](#) (NFFC), a USDA-funded effort to promote forest farming in the Northeast US through research, education, outreach, and community organizing.

The model of the NFFC was developed out of his experiences in agroforestry work in Appalachia, where he directed the Sustainable Forestry program at Rural Action, and before that, served as an AmeriCorps volunteer.



Aside from advancing community-led agroforestry, Karam loves camping in his 1987 VW camper van and knows a member of the Late Show with Stephen Colbert's band! His name means "generous" in Arabic.

Karam's vision for agroforestry

"Communities that live on and with the land always understand it best, and modern agroforestry is entirely indebted to the farmers, managers, and stewards who take the time and care to reveal the best combinations of species, suitable planting locations, planting techniques that support successful agroforestry implementation. Recognizing this means recognizing that scaling agroforestry in community is the most ethical and most practical way into the future."

Steering Committee Members

Alicia Thompson (she/her)
(Navajo Woman)

Region: Southwest

Alicia completed her graduate education at Northern Arizona University, with her studies focusing on Indigenous foodways and integrating them into Indigenous environmental management. She is a landless farmer with chickens, honeybees, and a native plants and foods nursery. Currently, Alicia is building a food forest demonstration garden using Indigenous permaculture and traditional knowledge.

Alicia is also an Indigenous consultant who provides guidance on working with tribal partners and guidance for Tribes in native nation-building strategies. Her work with [Young Farmers](#) includes advocating and uplifting BIPOC and disadvantaged farmer stories to help influence policies surrounding the farm bill. This advocacy also incorporates uplifting regenerative values and voices, including agroforestry, into the political realm.



Aside from advancing community-led agroforestry, Alicia likes to observe the moon cycle for planting and self-care purposes, binge watching Real Housewives, and she could live off of dark chocolate.

Alicia's vision for agroforestry

“[Agroforestry] is the solution to climate change mitigation and adaptation. I would like to see this committee identify realistic ways to open up funding resources to smaller-scale farmers/ranchers that are practicing agroforestry. I would also like to see how the committee can ride the wave of politics and strategize long-term on sustainability of this work and how that looks with various political parties.”

Steering Committee Members

Ruth Tyson (she/her)

Region: Midwest

Ruth has invested in understanding her curiosity and passion for sustainable food as a bridge between the natural and social worlds. After studying sociology and environmental studies, she committed to building sovereign, sustainable, transparent, and just local food economies for communities like the food apartheid-impacted neighborhood she grew up in. She believes in the power of storytelling, art, and organizing as necessary healing modalities of individuals, communities, and ecosystems.

Ruth has brought a black queer feminist framework to the gardening/farming, education, advocacy, nutrition, food service, food retail, and foraging worlds of the DMV. Currently, Ruth serves as Market Manager for Govans Farmers Market, a landscaper, a community educator with Chesapeake Harvest, and a JEDI consultant with [Interlace Commons](#). She views agroforestry as a bridge to restore connection and reciprocity between the human and nonhuman worlds.



Aside from advancing community-led agroforestry, Ruth started a band named Free Breakfast, spends time with her black cat, Jake, and spends her birthday diving into a river.

Ruth's vision for agroforestry

“Agroforestry can transform our extractive and unsustainable agricultural systems to those that allow us to thrive.”

Ruth envisions uplifting BIPOC voices in agroforestry through supporting “a roadmap for community-led agroforestry co-developed with on-the-ground agroforesters, a compilation of resources for BIPOC farmers and land stewards to learn about and implement new practices, and networks for BIPOC farmers to create peer to peer learning and exchange opportunities, including funding for impactful initiatives.”