

Nominated Officer Bios

President

Kris Stone - Kristopher Stone is a graduate of the University of Kentucky with a B.S. in Plant and Soil Science (Horticultural Science). Currently, Kris holds the position of Director of Boone County Arboretum and has been with the facility since January of 2002. Kris is highly active in various community organizations in the Greater Cincinnati area and region, building community awareness and networking for the Arboretum. He serves as past President of the Northern Kentucky Urban and Community Forestry Council, Advisory member of Boone County Urban Forest Commission, past President and Board member of the Kentucky Invasive Plant Council, Vice- President of Taking Root 2020, and is an ex-officio board member of Friends of Boone County Arboretum. Kris serves on the steering committee of the Theodore Klein Plant Award Selection Committee, and the Kentucky Urban Forestry Council, ensuring the Arboretum provides full support of these efforts. He also serves on various other ad hoc committees for community and state organizations when time allows. Kris is a writer for Kentucky Gardener Magazine where he contributes monthly as the Ask the Expert columnist.

In his youth, growing up less than 30 minutes from Bernheim Arboretum provided significant influence in his career path, for even at an early age he possessed a love of plants. His main areas of interest have always been with woody plants, especially trees and shrubs.

As Director of the Arboretum Kris's main responsibilities is to provide leadership for staff in the areas of policy-making, development, budget management, funding, planning, organizing of operations, and staffing for facility needs. With a staff of only 3 full-time personnel and 6 seasonal college interns taking care of and managing a 121-acre facility, everyone wears each other's hats!

Vice President

Elizabeth Fet - Liz has spent over twenty years doing field work in various fields, adding to her broad background in many aspects of science and biology. She is a graduate of Marshall University (MU) with a BS degree in Zoology and Environmental Science as well as a Master's Degree in Biology. During her undergraduate career, she worked as a research assistant in multiple labs – Paleontology lab- working on mammalian teeth from the Eocene; Biogeography and molecular lab-working on scorpion genetics, morphology and biogeography; and Herpetological – conducting population surveys for amphibians within West Virginia. She started her career as biologist at ORSANCO, working with both the electrofishing and the water quality crews conducting surveys along the Ohio River. She later joined SD1 as an aquatic biologist. Working at SD1 for that last six years, her focus has been on understanding the interactions of stream ecology and urban hydrology in order to more effectively manage the physical and ecological impacts of storm water runoff. She is in charge of implementing the regional stream monitoring and assessment program. She has authored/co-authored ten peer reviewed manuscripts, and multiple technical reports.

Nominated Board Member Bios

Jessica Spencer - Jessica Spencer is a resident of Covington and has been involved with the Council since 2013 or 14. She currently serves as chair of the Reforest NKY and Taking Root NKY Committee. Other volunteer efforts include membership on the Covington Urban Forestry Board, Covington Parks Advisory Group, and Secretary of the Cincinnati Wildflower Preservation Society. During the day she is Director of Natural Resources at Great Parks of Hamilton County where she has worked since 2014. In her position she oversees a team of interdisciplinary specialists who coordinate programs in conservation, restoration, wildlife management, watershed management, urban forestry, nature trails and sustainability. Jessica is also passionate about diversity and inclusion, helping to lead Great Park's D&I initiative. Prior to working at Great Parks, she was employed as Restoration Ecology Project Associate for The Wilds Conservation Center in Cumberland, Ohio where she was involved in forest, prairie and wetland restoration projects. She is an Associate Ecologist certified by the Ecological Society of America (ESA) and an Ohio Certified Prescribed Fire Manager. Jessica serves on the Ohio Community and Wildlife Cooperative (OCWC) conference planning committee. She received her Master of Environmental Sciences from Miami University in 2012. Jessica previously worked in the art and framing industry while sidelining as a Sustainability Coordinator. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Art from Syracuse University in 2004.

Kris Stone (see above, bio included for office of President)

Kristy Hopfensperger, PH.D. - Kristy is the Director of the Environmental Science Program at Northern Kentucky University (NKU) and has been a faculty in the Department of Biological Sciences at NKU since 2009. Kristy's research lab is focused on plant community interactions with ecosystem processes, which lends itself towards studies on invasive species, water quality, and climate change. Since moving to NKU, her work has been urban/suburban focused with studies on storm water wetlands, green infrastructure, and invasive species along waterways. Her passion is mentoring undergraduate students in research and demonstrating to them the value of community engagement. Towards these efforts she has developed a strong internship program for environmental science students at NKU and mentored over 50 students in research experiences. In 2014 Kristy partnered with NKUCFC to start long-term research on the success of the volunteer-driven Reforest NKY events. Following structured research guidelines developed with NKUCFC, Kristy and students have collected data on over ten past Reforest NKY sites. Kristy's past efforts and excitement for working with community partners was recognized with awards by both NKU and the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2018. It is because of Kristy's belief that partnering with the community can lead to faster advances in science, better conservation of land, and more well-rounded training of our next generation of land stewards that she would be honored to serve on the board of NKUCFC.

Mary Unterreiner - Mary has been Executive Director of The Boone Conservancy since 2015. Her passion for the conservation of Kentucky's natural and historic resources can be credited to her upbringing in Rabbit Hash, KY. She attended Eastern Kentucky University from 2008-2012 and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology. Immediately following graduation, she attended graduate school at the University of Kentucky and received her Master's Degree in Historic Preservation in 2014. Upon completing her Master's Degree, she moved back to NKY and began her tenure on the Rabbit Hash Historical Society's board of directors. She became Executive Director of The Boone Conservancy in 2015, which led her to serving on the committees of additional conservation organizations, including the Reforest NKY Planning Committee and the Kentucky Land Trusts Coalition. Recently, Mary has expanded her professional experience to include historic preservation consulting. She currently consults for the City of Cincinnati and City Studios Architecture on historic tax credits and guidelines for historic districts. She is always looking for new opportunities to learn and serve her community, as well as to develop professionally as an advocate for conservation, both environmental and historic. Mary currently resides in Park Hills, KY and is excited to become involved with NKUCFC.

Maryann Schultz - Maryann grew up in the Ft. Wright area and later moved to Taylor Mill where she raised four children. Currently, she lives in Alexandria. Through most of her adult life, advocating for environmental issues has been important to her. Her training as an RN added to the urgency she felt to provide a safe and healthy environment for all. When her children attended Taylor Mill Elementary, she volunteered for the PTA as the Environmental Chairperson. One of the major issues at the time involved trying to get local communities and waste haulers to begin recycling. Maryann's interests expanded to participating in Sierra Club activities and volunteering for trail maintenance with the Nature Conservancy at Boone Cliffs. As her children left home, she decided she wanted to go back to school. Horticulture seemed to be a good way to channel her interests in environmental issues. Maryann graduated from Cincinnati State with Associate degrees in Landscape Horticulture and Sustainable Horticulture. Her interest in plants, especially trees, was further cemented by her internship at the Boone County Arboretum. She was introduced to the Northern Kentucky Urban and Community Forestry Council and attended meetings when able. She participated in the Reforest NKY events at St. Anne's Convent, Devou Park, Idlewild Park, and the Campbell County Sanitation District. For the last couple years, Maryann volunteered with the City of Alexandria at their Arbor Day seedling giveaway, providing information on trees and correct planting techniques. She currently works as the Horticulture Technician at the Kenton County Cooperative Extension.

Susan Brown - Susan was introduced to environmental education as an undergraduate research fellow at Morehead State University. After earning her degree in Environmental Science, she pursued her passion for helping other people connect to the natural world through several seasonal naturalist positions in unique landscapes across the country, including the Ohio River valley, scrub forests of central Florida, and the rainforests of the Pacific Northwest. While living in Washington, she received a M.Ed. in Environmental Education from Western Washington University and a certificate in Leadership and Nonprofit Administration from the North Cascades Institute. In Boston, she worked with the Appalachian Mountain Club to pilot an innovative health and wellness program, which helped pediatric patients and their families fill “nature prescriptions” in urban and suburban communities. After returning to her home state of Kentucky, Susan served as Director of Programming at Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan County. There, she managed the James E. Bickford State Nature Preserve and managed a variety of residential outdoor education and recreation programs for children and adults. Recently, Susan returned to her Northern Kentucky roots. She manages conservation education programs for both the Boone County Conservation District and Sanitation District No. 1, and enjoys helping people of all ages find connections to their natural environment.

Tanner Yess - Tanner was raised by scientists, and grew up paddling, pedaling, and planting trees. Whether on the trail or in the lab, he learned how to hustle in settings that lacked diverse representation. After earning a degree in environmental science and restoration, he worked on a fishing vessel in the Bering Sea. His Peace Corps service involved resource management, education and eco-tourism. During graduate school, Tanner helped form Greater Cincinnati’s Tri-State Trails Coalition. He is a National Park Service Mountains to Main Street Ambassador; SHIFT Emerging Leader; and recipient of the 2018 Murie Center Rising Leader Award. As part of Groundwork USA he builds programs that connect communities to nature through recreation, science, and jobs. Yess’ passion is creating new pathways for urban youth to access green careers.

Victor Vanover - Victor is currently the Land Manager for Boone County Parks. Vic went to Northern KY University and majored in Environmental Science, and while there fell in love with ecological restoration due to his work with the NKU Center for Environmental Restoration. Vic is currently also serving on Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District as treasurer and on the Reforest Northern Kentucky Planning Committee. Vic loves the outdoors and any opportunity to get in the woods, especially to hike with his daughters in tow.