



# **SOUTHEAST ALASKA FARMERS SUMMIT**

**February 20-22, 2025 | Juneau, Alaska**

Hosted by Spruce Root in partnership  
with Farragut Farm  
[seakfarmerssummit.com](https://seakfarmerssummit.com)

# Thank You to Our Sponsors!

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# **A big thank you to the Farmers Summit Advisory Committee for dedicating their time to this event:**

**Bo Varsano & Marja Smets**, Farragut Farm

**Andrea Fraga**, Middle Island Gardens

**Laura Schmidt**, St. Peter's Fellowship Farm

**Joe Orsi**, Orsi Organic Produce

**Deb Hurley**, Flower Farm

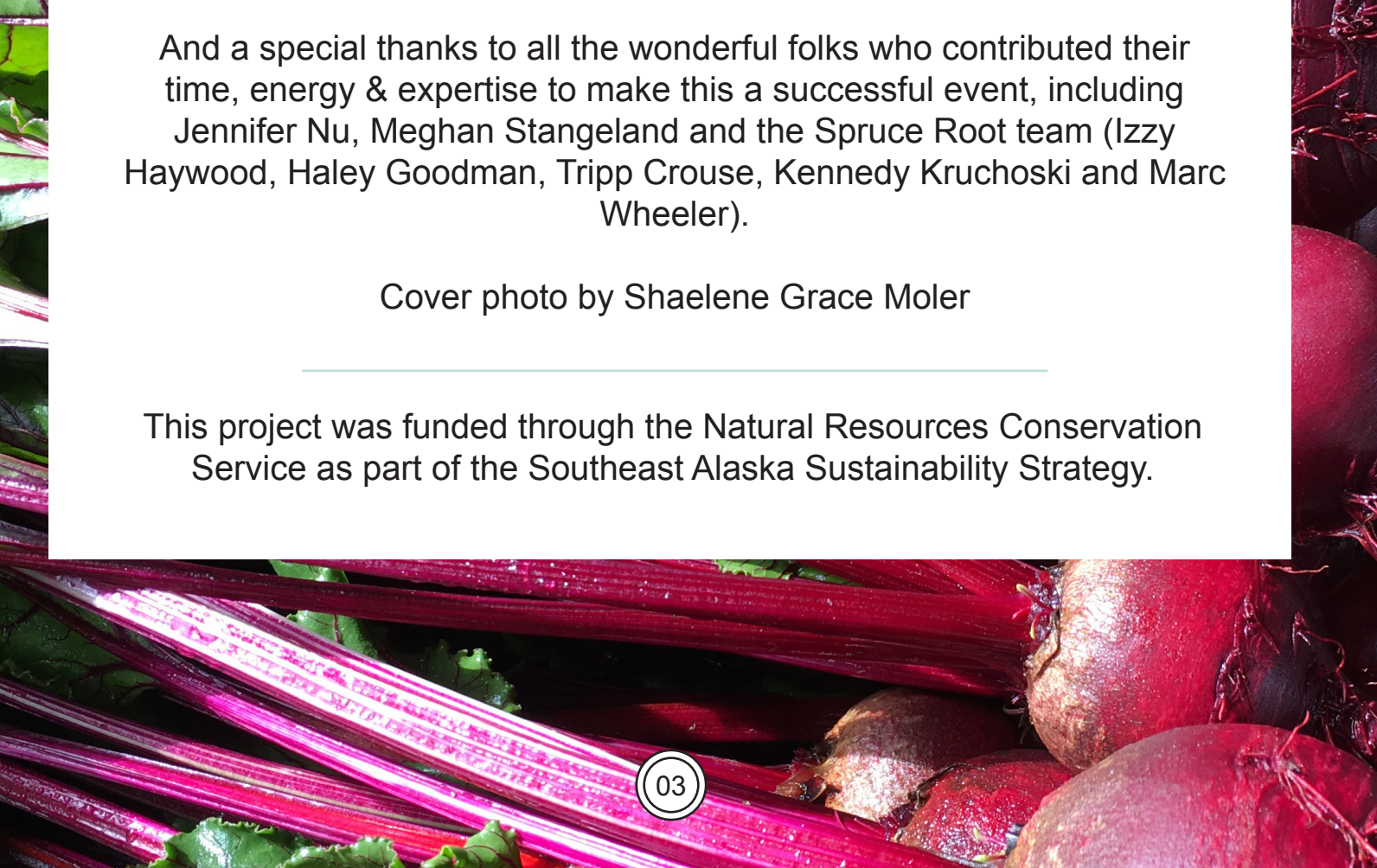
**Darren Snyder**, UAF Cooperative Extension Service

**Samia Savell**, Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Participants were kept well fed by generous food donations from the following folks: Laura Schmidt, Stellar Botanical Health, Gatgyeda Haayk, Sunnyside Farms, Katherine Ivy, Orsi Organic Produce, Farragut Farm, Middle Island Gardens, Juneau Greens, Twitter Creek Gardens, Ed's Edible Landscaping and Barnacle Foods

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And a special thanks to all the wonderful folks who contributed their time, energy & expertise to make this a successful event, including Jennifer Nu, Meghan Stangeland and the Spruce Root team (Izzy Haywood, Haley Goodman, Tripp Crouse, Kennedy Kruchoski and Marc Wheeler).

Cover photo by Shaelene Grace Moler

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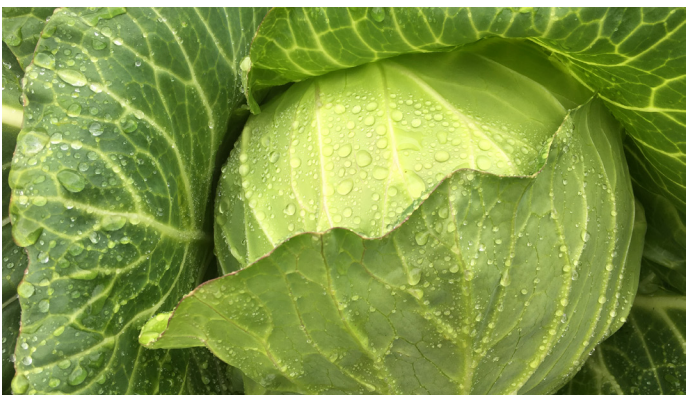
Photo courtesy of Deb Hurley, Flower Farm



# Welcome!

The Southeast Alaska Farmers Summit brings together growers, entrepreneurs and local food enthusiasts from around the region to exchange resources, share insights & best practices and to collaborate and work towards localizing our food system.

The Summit has been held biennially since 2015, each year being hosted by a different community in an effort to reach as many Southeast Alaskans as possible! This year is the 10-year anniversary of the summit. To celebrate, we have put together an incredible line-up, including many regional farmers presenting on their areas of expertise, as well as some new faces from up north (Tom & Susan of Calypso Farm in Fairbanks) and down south (Kelpie Wilson, biochar expert from Oregon).



Photos courtesy of Farragut Farm



# Guest Speakers



## **Kelpie Wilson, Wilson Biochar**

Kelpie Wilson is a mechanical engineer and analyst with 35 years of experience in renewable energy, sustainable forestry, and resource conservation. She has worked in the biochar industry since 2008 and was a founding board member of the US Biochar Initiative. She hosts the Biochar in the Woods network to promote biochar production in place to benefit native ecosystems. Kelpie researches and teaches techniques for making biochar and using it in gardens and native landscapes. She presents many biochar workshops each year for gardeners, farmers, foresters, and landowners, and sells her Ring of Fire Biochar Kilns through Wilson Biochar, LLC. She lives in rural Oregon, where she makes biochar compost and grows a large organic vegetable garden that feeds two families.



## **Tom Zimmer & Susan Willsrud, Calypso Farm**

Calypso Farm and Ecology Center is an educational farm in Ester, Alaska, offering hands-on education programs for people of all ages. Susan is an enthusiastic advocate for local food and has worked extensively with other organizations and community leaders to forward sustainable agriculture in Alaska. Susan co-founded Calypso with her husband Tom in 2000. Tom has wide-ranging experience working with diverse agricultural systems, including working as a Peace Corps volunteer in West Africa where he designed and developed a sub-Saharan fruit orchard and nursery, and worked to develop home gardens.



## **Sundance Visser, Alaska Food Policy Council**

Sundance Visser is the Operations and Finance Director at the Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC). She grew up in Iowa and has been a resident of Alaska since 2006, first working in the tourism industry and then as a wild-fire dispatcher, always with farm work on the side. While managing Alaska Seeds of Change, a vocational skills and hydroponics program in Anchorage, she attended her first AFPC conference (2017), experienced Alaska's vibrant food systems community, and wanted to do more. She holds an MBA in Sustainable Organizations from Prescott College with her capstone project of "Alaskanizing Salmon-Safe Standards" focused on the Cook Inlet watershed. Sundance lives in Homer, Alaska, with her little family, their garden, and countless projects.



# Vendor Info

Name	Product/Service	Contact Information
Alaska Commercial Fishing and Agriculture Bank	Financing for the commercial fishing, agriculture, tourism, and resource industries of Alaska	sharon@cfabalaska.com
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation	Information on the Produce Safety Program and other outreach materials	dena.cologgi@alaska.gov
Alaska Food Policy Council	The Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC) connects, advocates, and informs, to strengthen food systems for all Alaskans.	operations@alaskafoodpolicycouncil.org
Assistive Technology of Juneau	Information about a program that helps Alaskans with disabilities stay in their desired careers	tori@atlaak.org
Bobcat of Juneau	Tractors/farm vehicles sales and rental	markk@bobcatofjuneau.com
Ed's Edible Landscaping	Locally grown seeds and starts	edbuyarski@hotmail.com
Natural Resources Conservation Service	USDA program information, including the EQIP High Tunnel Initiative	samia.savell@usda.gov
RightRisk	Information on risk management and crop insurance materials	jtranel@erightrisk.com
Spruce Root	Information about regional small business development and programs	grow@spruceroot.org
Sunnyside Farms	Locally grown vegetables	svhansen@aptalaska.net
University of Alaska Fairbanks	Information & brochures about extension service programs	dgsnyder@alaska.edu
UAF Cooperative Extension (AgrAbility)	Info on AgrAbility program resources to help Alaskans working in an agricultural industry who may have a barrier that limits their independence	lashallcross@alaska.edu
Western SARE	Information about grants and education from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute for Food and Agriculture	camatney@alaska.edu
Farm & Garden Book Swap	Free farm & garden books - bring one to share, take a new one home to enjoy!	seakfarmerssummit@gmail.com



# Thursday Agenda

**All meals will be served at Chapel by the Lake.**

7:15 - 8:15 am		BREAKFAST
7:45 - 8:45 am	Doors Open, Check In, Participant Registration	
8:45 - 9:15 am	Conference Welcome	
9:15 - 9:45 am	<b>Vendor/Education Room Introductions</b>	This “lightning speed” round of introductions will get you up to speed on all the vendors & educational organizations available to speak with you in the Vendor/Education Room throughout the Summit.
9:45 - 10:15 am	<b>Farmer Resource Share Session</b>	What has been a key resource for the development of your farm? This show & tell session will encourage farmers to share with the group any type of resource that has been helpful to their farm’s success including books, programs, people, websites, techniques, etc.
10:15 - 10:45 am	Break	
10:45 - 11:45 am (Available via Zoom)	<b>Biochar Basics</b> Kelpie Wilson, Wilson Biochar LLC	Biochar is an exceptionally valuable soil amendment that you can make yourself with minimal equipment. Kelpie, the biochar goddess, will start from ground zero with a thorough explanation of just exactly what bioactivated charcoal is along with methods you can use to create it on your farm.
11:45 am - noon	Break	
noon - 1:00 pm		LUNCH
1:00 - 2:00 pm (Available via Zoom)	<b>2025 Featured Alaska Farmers</b> Tom Zimmer & Susie Willsrud of Calypso Farm	This year’s rockstar farmers hail from Fairbanks, AK; Susan & Tom will share the ins and outs of their all-encompassing vegetable and educational farm. Prepare to be inspired!
2:00 - 2:15 pm	Break	

## THURSDAY CONTINUED

2:15 - 3:00 pm	<b>Small Group Discussions &amp; Workshops</b>	An opportunity to have an intimate discussion with a small group of fellow farmers. Topics will include biochar, grant writing, composting, high tunnels, growing flowers, seed saving, soil blocking, farm-to-school sales, farm business management and more!
3:00 - 3:15 pm	Break	
3:15 - 3:45 pm (Available via Zoom)	<b>Salmon Safe Agriculture for Alaskans</b> Sundance Vissor, Alaska Food Policy Council	Since the late '90s Salmon Safe has been working with farmers across the Pacific Northwest to protect water quality and wildlife habitat in agricultural areas that border salmon streams. Find out more about their efforts to "Alaskanize" the program and the certification process for small scale farmers.
3:45 - 4:15 pm	Break	
4:15 - 5:15 pm (Available via Zoom)	<b>Tribally-led Agricultural Projects in SEAK</b> Gatgyeda Haayk of Metlakatla, Penny James of Yakutat, Amy Erfling of Tlingit & Haida & Ryan Smith of Hoonah	Over the last few years many of SEAK's Indigenous communities have embarked upon new food production projects in an effort to increase the amount of fresh & nutritious food available to their tribal members. Learn more about these efforts from the hardworking folks who are leading the charge!
5:15 - 5:30 pm	Break	
5:30 - 7:00 pm	DINNER	
7:00 - 8:00 pm	<b>Favorite Farm Tools &amp; Time-Saving Ideas</b> Farmer panel plus audience participation	What is your favorite tool for obliterating weeds? Have you discovered the fastest, most efficient way to set up a farmstand? Join a panel of seasoned farmers for a fun evening of sharing ideas for great tools and techniques to make your job easier! This session is for sharing and the stage is open to all!

## Small Group Roundtable Discussions and Workshops

These intimate workshops offer an opportunity to speak with specialists and fellow farmers in a small group setting. Questions are encouraged, as well as sharing your own personal experience as it relates to the topic of discussion. Groups will be limited in size, so sign up beforehand to secure your spot. Sign-ups will be available in person on Day 1 of the Summit. Topics will include biochar, grant writing, composting, high tunnels, growing flowers, seed saving, soil blocking, farm-to-school sales, farm business management and more!



# Friday Agenda

7:15 - 7:45 am	Morning Farmer Yoga	
7:15 - 8:15 am	BREAKFAST	
8:30 - 8:40 am	Welcome & Intro to the Day	
8:40 - 9:10 am (Available via Zoom)	<b>SEAK Farmer Snapshot Presentations:</b> Oceanview Gardens, Laura Ballou	Hear and see what agriculture currently looks like across our region! Local farmers offer “farm tours” via photos & videos, including details of what they grow, their production methods and marketing strategies.
9:10 - 9:40 am (Available via Zoom)	<b>SEAK Farmer Snapshot Presentations:</b> Root Seller Farm, David & Nikki Love	See description above.
9:40 - 9:50 am	Break	
9:50 - 10:20 am (Available via Zoom)	<b>SEAK Farmer Snapshot Presentations:</b> Sarah Dolan, Rising Tide Farm	See description above.
10:20 - 10:50 am (Available via Zoom)	<b>SEAK Farmer Snapshot Presentations:</b> Sally Boisvert, Four Winds Farm	See description above.
10:50 - 11:20 am	Break	
11:20 - 11:50 am (Available via Zoom)	<b>El niño/La niña, Interpreting Weather patterns That Affect Your Farm Production</b> Nicholas Morgan, NOAA meteorologist	One of the biggest factors affecting your farm’s success each season is the weather! In this session we will get a briefing on the general weather patterns in SEAK and learn what to expect from the swings between El niño and La niña summers in Southeast Alaska.
11:50 am - noon	Break	
noon - 1:00 pm	LUNCH	
1:00 - 2:00 pm (Available via Zoom)	<b>Using Biochar to Enhance Your Farm’s Soil</b> Kelpie Wilson, Wilson Biochar LLC	Bioactivated charcoal has been used around the world by farmers for thousands of years as a way to enrich soils and improve the health of livestock. Discover the myriad ways biochar can be utilized to enhance the productivity of your farm.

## FRIDAY CONTINUED

2:00 - 2:10 pm	Break	
2:10 - 2:55 pm	<b>Small Group Discussions &amp; Workshops</b>	An opportunity to have an intimate discussion with a small group of fellow farmers. Topics will include biochar, grant writing, composting, high tunnels, growing flowers, seed saving, soil blocking, farm-to-school sales, farm business management and more!
2:55 - 3:05 pm	Break	
3:05 - 3:35 pm (Available via Zoom)	<b>Hydroponic Growing Walls — Farm Anywhere You Can Set Up a Shipping Container,</b> Ketchikan Evergreens	Ever wondered how you could grow more food for your community year-round? Listen closely as Geoff & Jess Jans tell the story of launching their Ketchikan-based, state-of-the-art vertical hydroponic growing operation.
3:35 - 3:40 pm	Movement Break	
3:40 - 4:10 pm (Available via Zoom)	<b>Soil Science, a Biological Perspective</b> Tom Zimmer, Calypso Farm	What the heck is happening below the soil surface? Soil tests often reflect the chemistry of your farm's earth, but what's up with all the living creatures? Learn about new biological soil testing methods at Calypso Farm.
4:10 - 4:40 pm	Break	
4:40 - 5:20 pm (Available via Zoom)	<b>Southside Community Farmers Market, a Case Study</b> Susan Willsrud, Calypso Farm	Farmers Markets foster community connection and healthy living by offering fresh, nutritious foods, education, art & live music. Hear the story of the Fairbanks' thriving Southside Community Market and get inspired to start a farmers market!
5:20 - 5:30 pm	Break	
5:30 - 7:00 pm	DINNER	

## FRIDAY POST DINNER OPTIONS

FRIDAY 7:00 - 8:00 pm OPTION 1	<b>Sharing Your Marketing Experiences</b> <b>Circle Discussion</b> Meghan Stangeland and Joe Orsi in Fellowship Hall	Looking for tips on how to market your produce and other farm products? Join us for a lively discussion where participants can share what has (and hasn't) worked for their Southeast AK farms. Walk away with some new ideas on how to sell everything you grow.
FRIDAY 7:00 - 8:00 pm OPTION 2	<b>The (Cabbage) Moth Hour</b> <b>Open Mic Night</b> Isabella Haywood, host at UAS Student Activity Center	It's time for Farmer Story Hour! Bring your farm-related stories, poetry, or songs to share during this light-hearted audience participatory event. Everyone is encouraged to take a turn in front of the mic!



# Saturday Agenda

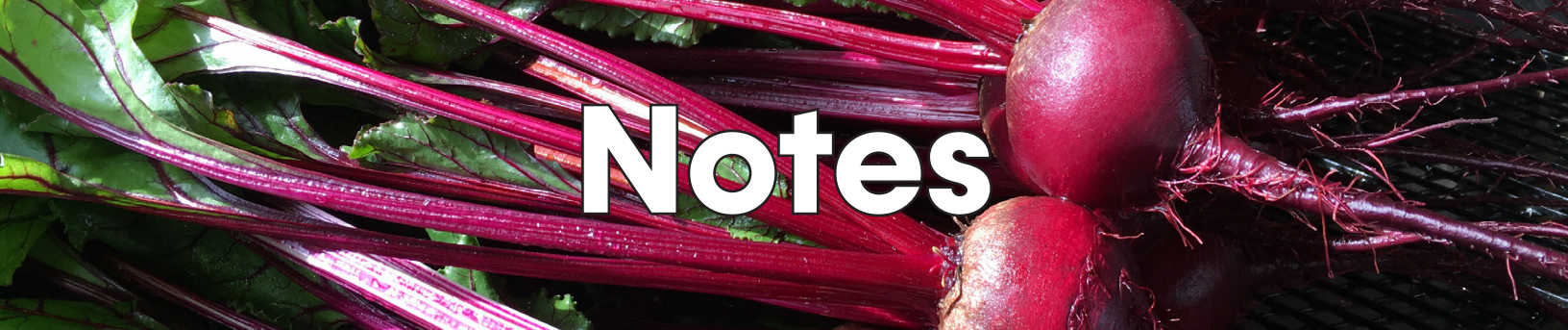
7:15 - 7:45 am	Morning Farmer Yoga	
7:15 - 8:15 am	BREAKFAST	
8:30 - 8:40 am	Welcome and Introduction to the Day	
8:40 - 9:25 am OPTION 1	<b>BEGINNER: Beginner Farmer Business Planning</b> Marc Wheeler, Spruce Root	Would you rather be digging in the dirt than posted up in front of the computer dealing with paperwork and accounting? Marc will offer some great tips and techniques to efficiently managing a small farm business in the most painless way possible.
8:40 - 9:25 am OPTION 2	<b>ADVANCED: Organizational Zen for your Farm Office</b> Taylor Mendell, Footprint Farm (Presented via Zoom)	Is your office desk buried underneath a messy pile of paperwork & to-do lists? Tidy-up and become an organizational zen master with help from Taylor Mendell of Footprint Farm in Vermont! Her helpful techniques and strategies for office and paper flow management will bring your farm business to the next level.
9:25 - 9:35 am	Break	
9:35 - 10:20 a.m.	<b>Small Group Discussions &amp; Workshops</b>	An opportunity to have an intimate discussion with a small group of fellow farmers. Topics will include composting, high tunnels, growing flowers, soils & amendments, small farm tools, hydroponics and more!
10:20 - 10:30 am	Break	
10:30 - 11:00 am (Available via Zoom)	<b>Flower Successions for SEAK</b> Sarah Dolan, Rising Tide Farm	Flowers can be a lucrative crop, but our wet, short growing season creates many challenges to success. Sarah will outline what varieties have worked well for her in Juneau, and how to plant for continual summer blooms.
11:00 - 11:30 am	Break	
11:30 am - noon (Available via Zoom)	<b>Enhancing Farm to School Connections</b> Carlee Johnson-McIntosh & Alex Helms, Petersburg School District	Most would agree that selling locally grown food to school lunch programs just makes sense. So why is it so difficult to get your product onto the lunch trays of your area school district? This session will outline strategies for improving farm-to-school relationships across Southeast Alaska.
noon - 1:00 pm	LUNCH	



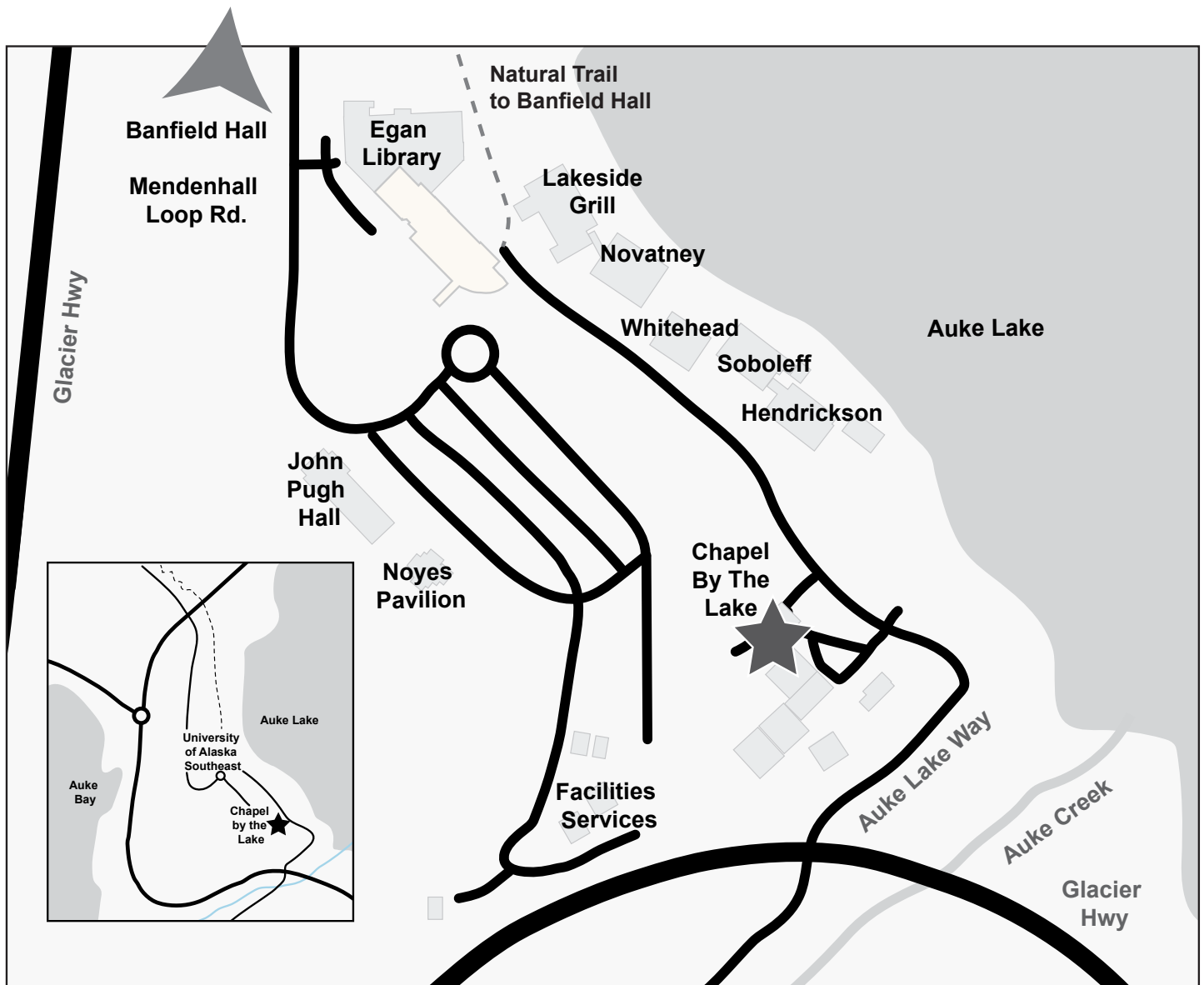
## SATURDAY CONTINUED

1:00 - 1:30 pm (Available via Zoom)	<b>Farm Till You're 80! How to Stay Strong &amp; Limber After a Lifetime of Physical Labor</b> Claire Geldhof, Registered Nurse	Tired? Sore? Dreaming of nightly appointments with a masseuse or chiropractor during the growing season? It's time to start giving your body as much love as you give your farm! Claire will offer up some ways to take good care of those old bones & muscles, so you can stay out in the fields for as long as possible!
1:30 - 1:40 pm	Break	
1:40 - 2:25 pm	<b>Small Group Roundtable Discussions</b>	An opportunity to have an intimate discussion with a small group of fellow farmers. Topics will include biochar, grant writing, composting, high tunnels, growing flowers, seed saving, soil blocking, farm-to-school sales, farm business management and more!
2:25 - 2:35 pm	Break	
2:35 - 3:05 pm (Available via Zoom)	<b>Strategies for Running a Successful Small Business in SEAK</b> Lisa Daugherty, Juneau Composts!	Running a small business is an all-consuming endeavor. Add to that the challenges presented by our remote, far-flung region and you've got troubles. Learn some helpful tips and tricks for better small business management from Lisa, the queen of Juneau Composts!, our region's largest composting service.
3:05 - 3:10 pm	Movement Break	
3:10 - 4:10 pm (Available via Zoom)	<b>Mixed Greens Production &amp; Marketing</b> Four Winds Farm & Ivy Patch Produce	Learn from a couple of skilled SEAK farmers who have truly dialed in their production & marketing methods for mixed baby greens. Sally and Katherine will get into the nitty-gritty about how they seed, harvest, wash and market baby greens on their farms in Haines and Wrangell.
4:10 - 4:40 pm	Conference Evaluations + Break	
4:40 - 5:20 pm	Closing Session - Harvesting the Wisdom From the Summit	
5:20 - 5:30 pm	Break	
5:30 - 7:00 pm	DINNER	
7:00 - 9:00 pm	Outdoor Fire Pit social hour at UAS Noyes Pavilion	

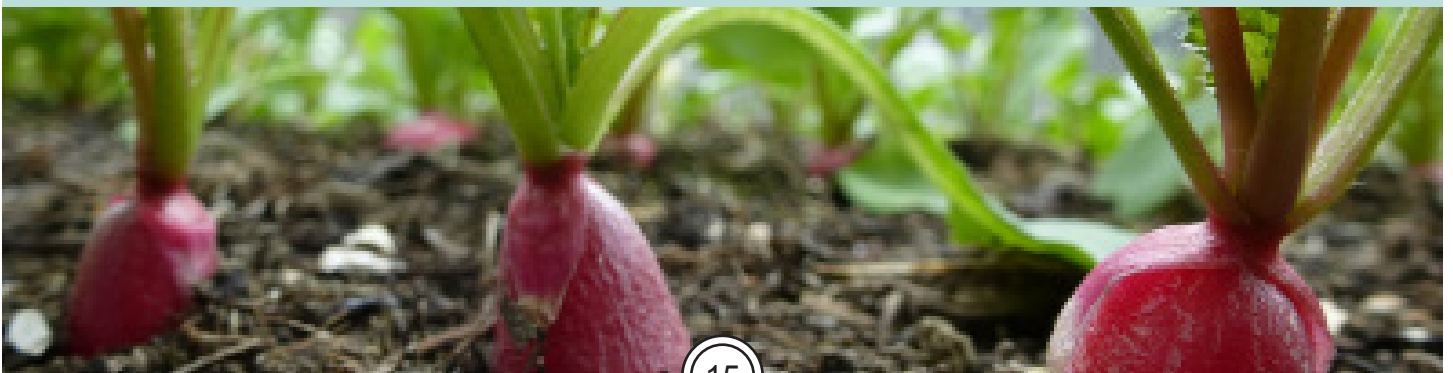




# Notes



Use this map as a guide for navigating University of Alaska Southeast. The Summit will be held at the Chapel by the Lake, 11024 Auke Lake Way, Juneau. SEAK Farmers Summit meals (for “all-inclusive” ticket holders only) will be served at the Chapel by the Lake.





A scenic sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, golden glow that reflects on the water's surface. The sky is filled with dramatic, layered clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and grey. In the foreground on the left, the dark silhouette of a wooden building with a gabled roof and a small porch is visible. In the distance, a range of mountains is silhouetted against the bright sky. The overall mood is peaceful and majestic.

# THANK YOU!

Thanks for joining us for the 2025 Southeast Alaska Farmers Summit in Juneau! We look forward to seeing you again in 2027!

This project was funded through the Natural Resources Conservation Service as part of the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy.

Photo by Shaelene Grace Moler