

# Region 13. Nueces

## Flood Planning Group

### Member Bios

#### **Debra Barrett, *Agricultural interests***

Debra Barrett farmed with her husband, John Barrett until his passing a few years ago. She now farms with her son, David Barrett. Debra is the fifth generation of the Odem family to farm on the uplands of the Nueces River Valley.

Local farmers elected Debra to serve as a County Committee Member of the San Patricio County USDA Farm Service Agency in 2002; she served in that position for seven years. In the 2010 Debra received a Presidential appointment to serve as the South Texas representative on the USDA/FSA State Committee. The producer committee oversees the USDA/FSA programs within the state of Texas. In 2017 she was appointed Chairman of the Committee.

In 2004, she was appointed by the USDA Secretary to serve on the Cotton Board which was created by cotton producers and administers an \$80,000,000 budget designated for the research and promotion of the cotton industry. Debra is currently on the Executive Committee of the Cotton Board. Debra is a recent graduate of the Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership Program. The TALL program was created to educate ag leaders on the issues facing production agriculture and encourage them promote the industry.

In 1996 Debra was appointed by then County Judge Josephine Miller to the San Patricio County Drainage District. In 2000 her fellow board's members elected Debra to serve as the boards President. She has served in that position for 20 years.

#### **Shanna Owens, *Counties***

"Shanna is the Flood Plain Manager for San Patricio County and the Assistant Emergency Management Coordinator. Since starting with the County, she has assisted in post-Harvey recovery planning, emergency operations plan development, exercise design and public education. She has worked diligently to create a Flood Plain Program for San Patricio County that will help in mitigating flood issues by following NFIP regulations and to educate citizens on how they can protect their property. Her goal for the program is to create a team of professionals with backgrounds in floodplain, engineering, building & codes, environmental, drainage and GIS to work towards a cohesive way to address flooding across the County.

As a new comer to Flood Plain Management, Shanna brings her Emergency Preparedness Planning to the table and looks at the issues in a new light. Communities need to work together in order to combat future flooding, but without the proper research and tools this is not possible. Shanna would like to see more work being done to use the land in a way that would mitigate the flooding issues, but allow for growth throughout the communities.

Shanna is instrumental in public outreach for San Patricio County as she organizes the annual All-Hazards Preparedness Fair hosted by San Patricio County Department of Emergency Management & Safety. This fair provides an opportunity for citizens to learn how to prepare for disasters, create evacuation plans and develop emergency kits. She is the Program Manager for the Coastal Bend CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) Program and organizes and provides training for citizens of San Patricio County. Her motto is the words of Sun-Tzu, A Artede Guerra, ""In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity.""

### **Lauren Williams, *Environmental interests***

Lauren Hutch Williams is a native Texan who loves spending time in nature and the great outdoors. As the Resilient Coast Program Director for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Texas, Lauren works with scientists, policy practitioners, community leaders and others to develop and implement strategies to create a resilient coast for Texas and the Gulf of Mexico. She oversees all aspects of science, strategy, project implementation and community regulations for the Texas Chapter's Coastal Program and provides leadership and support for the Chapter's conservation planning work, helping to establish overall conservation priorities for the Gulf coast.

To help communities adapt to climate change impacts such as coastal flooding, Lauren works with partners to implement the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS). Through CRS, opportunities to effectively reduce flood risk by protecting open space and restoring wetlands can be identified. These strategies are creditable components of CRS that can lead to significant flood insurance savings for communities, while also fulfilling TNC's mission to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

Prior to serving as the Resilient Coast Program Director for TNC Texas, Lauren worked as a Social-Ecological Scientist at the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies. Working alongside numerous partners, Lauren developed projects to incorporate ecosystem services and socio-economic metrics into various decision contexts, including coastal habitat restoration and management, freshwater inflow decision-making and coastal community resilience.

### **Jeffrey Pollack, *Industries***

Jeffrey Pollack is the Chief Strategy Officer at the Port of Corpus Christi, where he oversees all planning, environmental, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) functions. Jeff joined the Port in mid-2018 as its inaugural Director of Planning, with responsibility for strategic planning, land-use master planning (with an emphasis on coastal resilience), transportation planning, and federal and state grant pursuits. Prior to joining the Port, Jeff served as the Executive Director for the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Coastal Bend.

Jeff specializes in growth and development issues in coastal zones and brings specialized experience in multi-modal transportation and watershed planning. He holds a Masters degree in Coastal Environmental Management from Duke University, where he was a Doris Duke Conservation Fellow. Jeff is a certified planner through the American Institute of Certified Planners and is an Envision Sustainability Professional through the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure.

### **Lj Francis, *Municipalities***

Lj Francis, P.E. is a professional engineer working in Municipal Government as a Project Manager with over 8 years of experience in Water Resources Engineering, Project Management, Municipal Planning and developing a Capital Improvement Program. In his current role he develops and manages projects to address water issues including flood infrastructure systems planning; dams management; projected water demands, water supply availability and water treatment. Lj has served as a member of the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and successfully provide strategic operations aid to recuperate the community during and after Hurricane Harvey. In addition to serving with other member of the Nueces Regional Flood Planning Group, he serves on the Nueces County Beach Management Advisory Committee and on the Board of Direction of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)-Texas Section.

### **Adnan Rajib, *Public***

Dr. Adnan Rajib is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Environmental Engineering at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. His research areas mainly include flood prediction and inundation mapping, large-scale hydrology and water quality modeling, remote sensing, artificial intelligence, and data visualization. Before joining TAMUK in 2019, Dr. Adnan Rajib worked as a Post-doctoral Scientist at the US EPA Office of Research and Development. He received Ph.D. in Civil Engineering from Purdue University in 2017, with the prestigious Purdue Civil Engineering Outstanding Graduate Student award. Dr. Rajib has contributed to multiple projects on flood prediction and inundation mapping, in collaboration with EPA, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, NOAA Office of Water Prediction, and the US Army Engineer Research and

Development Center. His notable contributions to flood research include leading the development of the Ohio Basin Flood Prediction Framework and coordinating the NOAA National Water Center Innovators Program for National Water Model experiments. In his professional leadership roles, Dr. Adnan Rajib frequently convenes the American Geophysical Union fall meeting sessions on floodplain resilience. He is also the voting member of the Texas Water Development Board Flood Planning Group. Detail of Dr. Rajib's portfolio is available online at [www.adnanrajb.com](http://www.adnanrajb.com).

### ***Sky Lewey, River authorities***

Sky Lewey is a noted conservation advisor. For the Nueces River Authority she has worked to educate people and build common understanding for landscape-scale resource management and protection along rivers. She has created, led and implemented on-the-ground programs involving riparian management and restoration, invasive species control, and natural resource education. Through her "Remarkable Riparian Network" project she has taken riparian function concepts to landowners, resource professionals, and other decision makers, changing paradigms about how rivers work, helping people to interact with each other and manage riparian resources based on shared knowledge.

Sky comes from a ranching background and is still involved in that endeavor. She and her family live on the Open V Ranch northwest of Uvalde, Texas. She graduated from Drury University in Springfield Missouri in 1979 and in addition to her work on rivers, she has worked in environmental engineering, regional government, international marketing, education and historic preservation in her home town of Uvalde.

### ***Andrew Rooke, Small business***

Mr. Rooke is a licensed Civil Engineer (floodplain management focus) with more than 30 years' public (City of Austin, and the Lower Colorado River Authority) and private (global / local engineering consulting firms) experience in the technical, administrative, economic, and social aspects regarding the impacts that flooding has on communities. He is a global leader in flood preparedness / warning programs, and has managed flood risk studies for FEMA, states and local communities across the US.

He is also a managing partner in his family's ranch, a small business that has been operating in Refugio County since before the Texas revolution. He grew up in Refugio County, and while he resides in Austin, he owns a house on the ranch in Refugio County, and he returns frequently to participate in family, ranch, and local community events. He understands the importance of being a good steward of the land / environment and being supportive of community needs. He has personally witnessed the damage and long-term impacts that flooding has left in Refugio

and other communities in the region, and he is motivated to help the community find ways to improve its drainage infrastructure and related planning / maintenance / response / recovery programs.

**JR Ramirez, *Water districts***

General Manager of Chaparrosa Ranch

**Larry Dovalina, *Water utilities***

No information received.