



## 2026 NPBPA Annual Winter Conference

February 12-14, 2026

The Galt House • Louisville, KY

### Speaker Bios

**Mark Abney, PhD, *University of Georgia, Professor of Entomology and Extension Specialist*** – Dr. Mark Abney is a Professor of Entomology and Extension Specialist located at the University of Georgia Tifton Campus. Dr. Abney has been the Peanut Entomologist at UGA since 2013, and his current Extension and research program focuses on the ecology and management of insect pests of peanut in Georgia and the Southeastern US.

Mark's Extension and research priorities are based on existing needs of, and emerging threats to, the peanut industry. His programmatic efforts are focused on four key areas: 1. supporting county Extension faculty and facilitating grower adoption of best management practices for arthropod pests 2. expanding knowledge of the biology of soil insects and improving management of these challenging pests; 3. understanding landscape level ecological factors affecting insects in row crops and developing economic thresholds for key pests; 4. optimizing insecticide use to ensure efficacy, safety, and environmental sustainability.

A major emphasis of Mark's program is the development of new knowledge and the delivery of science-based information to address insect pest management challenges of concern to the peanut industry. Prior to his appointment at UGA, Mark was an Associate Professor of entomology at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, NC where his Extension and research programming focused on insect management in Vegetable crops with an emphasis on soil insect pests.

**Taylor Arnold, *Georgia Peanut Commission, Executive Director*** – Taylor Arnold is the new Executive Director of the Georgia Peanut Commission. He grew up on his family's farm in Calhoun County, Georgia, where they produced peanuts, cotton, and corn. This cultivated a lifelong connection to agriculture and a deep appreciation for the peanut industry. He earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from Mercer University in 2015.

Prior to joining the Georgia Peanut Commission, Arnold served as the County Executive Director for the Worth County Farm Service Agency. In that role, he administered a wide range of federal farm programs and served as a lead on the State of Georgia Payment Limitation Review Team. He brings both strong agricultural roots and administrative experience to his role and is committed to serving Georgia's peanut producers.

This last October, Taylor married his wife, McCall, and together they are excited to put down roots in Tifton, Georgia and be involved in the local community. McCall is a high school language arts teacher and Cheer Coach.

**Luke Blaustein, *American Peanut Council, CEO*** – Luke has served as president & CEO of the American Peanut Council since September 2025, overseeing the organization's strategic direction and daily operations. He also acts as the executive officer of the American Peanut Research and Education Society, managed by APC, and serves as an ex officio member of The Peanut Research Foundation.

Prior to coming to APC, Luke served as a diplomat for seven years in the Agriculture Department's Foreign Agricultural Service, where he led teams, offices and projects in Central Asia, the Arabian Gulf, Taiwan and Washington, D.C. His time in the foreign service was defined by projects as varied as the USA Pavilion at the Qatar World Cup, Central Asia Rodeo USA livestock marketing program, Taiwan organic trade agreement and evacuation of USDA partners from Afghanistan.

Luke was recruited to the Agriculture Department from a successful career in the private sector as an international grain trader, where he merchandised physicals and futures from farm to foreign port. His combined

14 years of private and public sector experience give him a unique view of the agribusiness industry and the needs of all stakeholders.

Luke holds a Bachelor of Science in Economics with a minor in Asian Studies from the University of Houston and a Master of Agribusiness from Texas A&M University. He was raised in Texas and Georgia but currently resides with his wife of 14 years, Sha, and their two sons, Han Lee and Arthur Bowen, on their family farm in West Virginia.

**Joe Boddiford, Georgia Peanut Commission/Screven Co. Peanut Farmer** – Joe Boddiford began his service to the Georgia Peanut Commission as an advisory board member in January of 1997. He was shortly elected by the growers in his district to the executive board and began his term in April of 1997. He has served as Vice-Chairman since April of 1998. He also served as Chairman from March of 2000 until April of 2001. He was again elected Chairman in February of 2022.

He received his BS in Mechanical Engineering from MIT in 1971 and his MS in Engineering from Purdue in 1973. Joe was reared on his family farm and has been farming full-time for 45 years. In addition to peanuts, he grows cotton, corn, wheat, and soybeans.

Joe has served as President of the Screven County Farm Bureau; He has also served as the Georgia Farm Bureau representative on the Georgia Soybean Association. He is a recipient of the Sandoz Peanut Partners Award. Currently at the Commission, Joe serves as Chairman of the Board and serves on the board of the American Peanut Council.

Joe resides in Sylvania and has two children, Lauren and Knapp, who currently farms with his dad.

**Chris Chammoun, American Peanut Shellers Association, Executive Director** – Chris Chammoun is the Executive Director of the American Peanut Shellers Association and President of The Peanut Institute. Chammoun previously served as Director of AgTech at the Georgia Department of Economic Development where he led economic development efforts in the agricultural technology sector in Georgia. Prior to that Chammoun was the Director of Public Affairs at the Georgia Cotton Commission. Chammoun holds an MS in Agricultural Economics from Texas A&M University and a BSA in Agricultural Economics from the University of Georgia. He resides in Tifton, GA with his wife and children.

**Larry Cunningham, R.L. Cunningham & Sons** – Larry was born and raised in Quitman, GA. He attended Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and graduated from the University of Georgia in 1980 with a BS in Agriculture. Larry has been married to the former Sharon Kelly for 47 years and has two sons, Robert and Chris and three grandchildren.

Larry owns and operates R.L. Cunningham & Sons, Inc. in Quitman, GA. Cunningham's is a fourth-generation family-owned peanut buying point and peanut seed sheller that was started in 1961.

Larry has been a member of the Brooks County Board of Education since 1993, currently serving as Chairman of that board. He is a member of First Baptist Church in Quitman.

**Courtney Dorsett, Premium Peanut** – Courtney Dorsett, a native of Savannah, Georgia, earned her B.S. in Horticulture from the University of Georgia and her M.S. in Food Safety from the University of Arkansas. With nearly 13 years in the peanut industry, she oversees Food Safety, Environmental Health & Safety, Research & Development, Warehousing Operations, and Sustainability across Premium Peanut's shelling, oil, and seed operations.

She is actively involved in industry leadership, serving on APSA's Board, the APSA Regulatory Compliance and Research Coordination Committee, The Peanut Research Foundation's Board of Directors, APC's Sustainability Committee, and The Peanut Institute's Marketing Committee.

Courtney resides in Douglas, Georgia, with her husband, Andy, and their adopted pets. Outside of work, she enjoys gardening, cooking, traveling, and giving back to her community as a volunteer for Keep Douglas Beautiful.

**Ron Dozier, *Producers Peanut*** – Ron Dozier was born and raised on a family farm in Plains, Georgia, where he was involved in a diversified row-crop operation that included peanuts, corn, soybeans, wheat, vegetables, and livestock. He previously worked as a research technician at the University of Georgia, with a focus on sustainable agricultural practices in row crops and vegetables.

Ron has served as Manager of Producers Peanut LLC since its inception in 2005. Producers Peanut is a member buying point of Premium Peanut and handles approximately 25,000 tons annually, primarily operating with semi-drying trailers and flat-storage warehouses. The operation was among the first buying points to utilize High Moisture Grade in peanuts. Ron has collaborated with the USDA, the University of Georgia, the Georgia Institute of Technology, and other industry partners on the development and evaluation of in-hull moisture measurement technology, implementation of the WECO automated moisture monitoring system, and evaluation of grading and drying methodologies.

**Congressman Brett Guthrie (R-KY-02), *United States House of Representatives*** – Congressman Brett Guthrie represents Kentucky's Second Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Second District is the home of the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln, Mammoth Cave National Park, and Fort Knox.

Guthrie was recognized for his leadership and was elected by his colleague to serve as the Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress. The Energy and Commerce Committee is the oldest standing legislative committee in the House with broad jurisdiction over our nation's energy, the environment, health care, telecommunications, and consumer product safety policies. Recognized for his proven leadership, Guthrie has served as a Deputy Whip within the House Republican Conference for three terms.

Guthrie graduated in 1987 from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and went on to serve as a Field Artillery Officer in the 101st Airborne Division – Air Assault at Fort Campbell. Guthrie later earned a Master's Degree from Yale University in Public and Private Management. Following his military service, he joined Trace Die Cast, the Bowling Green, Ky., based manufacturing business that was started by his father.

First elected to public office in 1998, Guthrie represented the 32nd District in the Kentucky Senate until being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2008.

Married to the former Beth Clemmons, they have three children, Caroline, Robby and Elizabeth. Brett and Beth are also the proud grandparents of Rowan and Laine, daughters of Caroline and her husband Ryan, and Oliver, son of Robby and his wife Jessica.

**Don Koehler, *Georgia Peanut Commission, Executive Director*** - Don has served as Executive Director of the Georgia Peanut Commission since 1986. He serves on the management team of the Southern Peanut Growers, the Southern Peanut Farmers Federation, and a member of the Executive Committee of the US Peanut Federation. He is currently serving his tenth term as a member and currently Chairman of the Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC), which advises USDA and the U.S. Trade Representative on trade policy issues.

He was named in the Georgia Trend 500 most influential Georgians for 2022. He is a 1979 graduate of Auburn University where he received his B.S. in Animal Science. He has served as an assistant county agent with the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service and as a regional manager of the American Soybean Association before becoming the Executive Director of the Georgia Peanut Commission.

He was raised on a small family farm in Southwest Alabama where they produced cattle, horses, and an occasional hog. They grew corn for feed and pasture. Don and his wife, Cheryl, reside in Tifton, GA where they

are members of First Baptist Church. He is a substitute Sunday School Teacher and sings in the choir. They have one son in heaven, one son who lives in Tifton, three grandsons and one granddaughter.

**Marshall Lamb, PhD, National Peanut Research Lab, Research Leader** - Marshall Lamb serves as Research Leader and Location Coordinator at the USDA/ARS National Peanut Research Laboratory and conducts research in USDA-ARS research project titled “Enhancing the Competitiveness of US Peanuts and Peanut-based Cropping Systems.” He has authored or co-authored over 200 scientific publications and abstracts, 3 book chapters, and has given over 500 invited presentations at international, national, and regional professional and industry meetings and workshops and has written an estimated 300 popular press articles. He developed an expert system for farm management and marketing risk management (WholeFarm), co-developed an expert system for peanut irrigation (Irrigator Pro for Peanuts). He has BS and MS degrees from the University of Georgia and a PhD from Auburn University. He was born and raised on a peanut farm in Randolph County, Georgia and enjoys helping his brother John on the farm daily. He has received several agency and industry awards including the 2002 USDA-ARS South Atlantic Area Young Scientist of the Year, 2006 Georgia Peanut Research and Education Award from the Georgia Peanut Commission, 2000 Silver Switch from the National Food and Energy Council for leadership in the area of water conservation in production agriculture, 2013 Peanut Profitability Partner Award from Farm Press and Southern Peanut Farmers Federation, 2015 Distinguished Service Award from the National Peanut Buying Points Association, and the 2017 Dow AgroSciences Award for Excellence in Research given by the American Peanut Research and Education Society. Marshall also serves as the National program advisor for the Farm Press Peanut Efficiency Award.

**Nick Lightfoot, WECO, Vice President of Emerging Markets** – Nick is the Vice President of Emerging Markets at WECO The Science of Optical Sorting. He is a customer-centric executive with a proven record of driving profitable growth through integrated solutions, cross-functional collaboration, and disciplined execution. Nick is an experienced leader in emerging and global markets with strengths in strategy, transformation, and partnership development—focused on delivering measurable outcomes and long-term customer value.

**Maria Mehok, National Peanut Board** – Maria Mehok serves as National Peanut Board’s Chief Operating Officer and SVP Finance & Compliance. Maria is a seasoned accounting and finance executive with a proven track record of strengthening financial operations, improving compliance, and leading high-performing teams. With experience ranging from public accounting to Controller and Executive-level roles across various industries, she brings a strategic mindset to financial reporting, budgeting, system implementation, and organizational growth. Outside of peanut business, Maria enjoys a quiet home life with her husband Eric and dabbles in her new hobby, Mahjong.

**Scott Monfort, PhD, University of Georgia, Extension Peanut Agronomist** - Dr. Scott Monfort serves as the Extension Peanut Agronomist for the University of Georgia. He is located at UGA's Tifton Campus. He joined the Extension Peanut Team on August 1, 2014, bringing extensive expertise in crop science and agronomy. Dr. Monfort earned a B.S.A. in Agriculture and an M.S. in Plant Pathology from the University of Georgia, followed by a Ph.D. in Plant Science from the University of Arkansas.

His work focuses on developing cost-effective crop management systems for peanuts, including cultivar evaluation, seed quality assessment, tillage practices, growth regulator and biological stimulant usage, and other agronomic practices. In addition to his research and extension responsibilities, Dr. Monfort leads the UGA Peanut Team's outreach and industry education efforts.

**Clay Pirkle, Georgia Federal State Inspection Service, Director of Operations** - Clay Pirkle was raised on the family farm in Sycamore, Georgia, where he learned the value of hard work, respect and integrity. While pursuing his

Bachelor of Science degree in Economics from the Georgia Institute of Technology, Clay worked on campus during the day and at the UPS Distribution Center at night. Later, while working on his MBA in Accounting and Finance at the University of Georgia in Athens, he worked as a teaching assistant in the economics department and as a technician in the soybean lab.

Clay is the President at Georgia Federal State Inspection Service and a farmer at Pirkle Farms where the motto is “Christianity is our business; we farm to pay expenses.” He is the 4th generation on his family farm where he grows peanuts, cotton, butterbeans, and raises cattle. He has also held positions as an economist with the US government, a commercial banker at a local bank and an economics instructor at Darton College. Clay served in the Georgia House of Representatives for almost 10 years.

Clay has been married to his childhood sweetheart, Sharon, for 38 years. They have three wonderful children, Andrew, DeAnna and Nathan. Clay is active in his church and serves on the Board of Directors of the Scott Dawson Evangelistic Association in Birmingham, Alabama.

**Robert (Bob) Redding, *The Redding Firm/U.S. Peanut Federation*** – Bob Redding is President of The Redding Firm, a government affairs firm located on Capitol Hill. Bob has worked in Washington on behalf of the peanut industry for his entire adult life – 12 years working for Members of the U.S. House and Senate on the appropriations and authorization side of agriculture, and since that time he has represented the peanut industry in all sectors of the federal government in Washington. As president of the U.S. Peanut Federation, he works to unify the voice of peanut growers, shellers, and buying points.

Most recently, Bob has been working tirelessly on our behalf on the Farm Bill, disaster assistance, economic assistance, trade and nutrition issues. He is a leading authority on the legislative process and specifically the Farm Bill.

Bob Redding is a native of Edison, Georgia and is a graduate of Mercer University in Macon, Georgia and the National Law Center at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He is married to the former Laura Fallin of Moultrie, Georgia, and they have three children.

**Dana Wood, *USDA Farm Service Agency, Price Support Division, National Program Manager for Peanut, Cotton and Alternate Delivery Partners*** – Dana Wood is originally from Lyons, Georgia, where she and her family maintain a small farm. She pursued a degree from Brewton-Parker College. Dana’s career in agriculture has been deeply rewarding, allowing her to share her passion for American farming with her three children.

Dana began working in agriculture at 19 in a local tobacco warehouse and later supported farming operations in South Georgia, managing sales, accounts receivable/payable, shipping, H2A payroll, and organic certifications for crops such as cotton, peanuts, Vidalia onions, and various fruits and vegetables.

For the past 16 years, Dana has served with the Farm Service Agency (FSA), transitioning to the Washington, D.C. area in 2016 to join the Program Delivery Division, focusing on price support automation for peanuts and cotton. Over the last six years, she has managed and developed policy and procedures for the Peanut Program and Alternate Delivery Program within the Price Support Division, expanding her responsibilities to include the Cotton Program in 2025.