



**The Virginia Soil Health Coalition**  
**Quarterly Meeting**  
**May 20, 2024**  
**1:00-3:00 PM**

## Agenda

**1:00-1:20: Grower's Corner: Soil Health Champion Feature**

- ❖ Becky Szarzynski of Ember Cattle Company

We are excited for the first edition of the “Grower’s Corner” section of our Quarterly Meetings. This new section will feature a soil health champion producer to share about their soil health process, understanding that soil health is a journey, not a destination. We hope to inspire our Coalition partners and share knowledge from a producer’s perspective on the journey including challenges, opportunities, and innovations.

**1:20-2:20: Rooted in Science: Perspectives on Soil Health from Virginia Tech’s New Faculty**

Two new faculty members at Virginia Tech will present an overview of their research and its relevance to soil health. They will discuss their ongoing projects and how they intersect with understanding and improving soil health. Additionally, they will share their goals for future research and outreach/education, highlighting opportunities for collaborations with partners and practitioners.

- ❖ **Dr. Huijie Gan, Assistant Professor, School of Plant and Environmental Science**

Dr. Gan’s program integrates fundamental and applied research in soil health and adopts new technologies to improve agricultural productivity and reduce the environmental impacts of food production systems. She is interested in belowground processes that support major soil functions and ecosystem services: (1) soil carbon and nutrient cycling for soil fertility and soil carbon sequestration; (2) soil-water dynamics for developing climate-resilient agriculture, and (3) root-microbe-fauna interactions for enhancing plant defense against biotic and abiotic stressors.

- ❖ **Dr. Ashley Jernigan, Assistant Professor, School of Plant and Environmental Science**

Dr. Jernigan’s work focuses on developing our understanding of soil biological processes to improve the sustainability of cropping systems. As an agroecologist, she takes a systems-level perspective to both crop nutrition and pest management. Her approach to research focuses on bridging ecological mechanisms to crop management practices.

**2:20-2:40: 2024 4 The Soil Reboot Vision**

- ❖ Dr. Eric Bendfeldt, Community Viability Specialist, Virginia Cooperative Extension
- ❖ Ennis Carter, Founding Director, Social Impact Studios

**2:40-3:00: Coalition updates: new and ongoing projects and partnerships**

