

A sunset over a field of grain with a dark teal text box overlaid. The sky is filled with vibrant orange and red clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon. The foreground shows a field of golden-brown grain, likely wheat or barley, with some stalks in sharp focus.

**EPA BUILDING BLOCKS FOR REGIONAL RESILIENCE**

**WORKSHOP ONE  
SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES**

# Thom Petersen

COMMISSIONER OF THE MINNESOTA  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Thom Petersen was appointed Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture by Governor Tim Walz in 2019. Commissioner Petersen is a long-time resident of Royalton Township near Pine City where he lives on a horse farm. Before being appointed Commissioner, Petersen served as the Director of Government Relations for Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) since 2002, working on behalf of MFU's farmer-members in both Washington, D.C. and St. Paul. Prior to his work at the Minnesota Farmers Union, Commissioner Petersen spent most of his life working for his family and his own horse and farm business. He has a wide range of experience in state and federal farm policy, and travels to almost every county in Minnesota each year to fully understand how these policies affect farmers' daily lives. He has served on many boards and committees, including the University of Minnesota Extension Citizens Advisory Committee, Farmers Legal Action Group, Citizens Utility Board, Minnesota Ag in the Classroom, Minnesota State Organic Task Force, Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition, and the Minnesota Fair Plan. Commissioner Petersen received his Associate's degree from Normandale Community College and studied at both the University of Minnesota and University of Georgia. The Commissioner and his wife Alana live in Pine City with their two sons. The Petersens show horses around the state and have competed at the Minnesota State Fair for over 25 years.



# Kenneth Blumenfeld

---

MINNESOTA STATE CLIMATE OFFICE, MINNESOTA  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Dr. Kenneth (“Kenny”) Blumenfeld is a climate scientist with the Minnesota State Climatology Office, where he provides the state’s agencies, communities, and citizens with up-to-date and scientifically accurate information about Minnesota’s changing and variable climate, and also oversees a network of weather monitoring stations. Kenny enjoys talking to Minnesotans about their weather, and often does it long after the work day is done.



# Nicole Griensewic

---

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, REGION NINE  
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Region Nine Development Commission, which serves nine counties in South Central Minnesota, works with and on behalf of counties, cities, townships, and schools to develop various programs and identify solutions in the areas of economic development, business development, healthy communities, transportation, community development, as well as leveraging regional resources. Griensewic's passion for public service is reflected in Region Nine's accomplishments, including national innovation awards for transportation projects, communication and marketing, and flood mitigation. Her responsibilities include overall administration, planning, organization, direction and control of Region Nine's programs and services. Griensewic is an active board and committee member for multiple organizations throughout Minnesota. Currently, she is an Executive Committee Member of the Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota, an Advisory Board Member for the Great Lakes Training Initiative, and a Board of Directors Member for Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota. Griensewic is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Her professional background includes extensive private sector and non-profit leadership experience.

