



DAVID R. ATKINSON CENTER
for a Sustainable Future
Cornell University



Atkinson Center Topical Lunch

Title: *Nature, Health, and Big Data*

Host: Steven Osofsky, Professor, Population Med & Diagnostic Sciences

Date: Tuesday February 19, 2019 12:00 – 1:00pm 300 Rice Hall

Featured Scholar:

Dr. Taylor Ricketts

Director, Gund Institute for Environment

Gund Professor, Rubenstein School

University of Vermont

Abstract - Through efforts like the Planetary Health Alliance, scientists, leaders, and citizens are becoming more aware of the links between nature and human health. However, specific health consequences of ecosystem change remain difficult to predict. Big data offers an opportunity to test general relationships and complement evidence from local case studies. In this talk, I will describe several ongoing efforts to use data science techniques to illuminate health impacts of global change. For example, we are testing the impacts of forest cover and protected areas on diarrhea, anemia, diet diversity, and other health factors, using a unique spatial dataset covering ~800,000 children from 49 countries. We are also estimating the impact of nature exposure on mental health, using sentiment analysis of Twitter messages from thousands of users. These and other studies are illuminating the mechanisms connecting ecosystems and human health, and can help to identify when nature conservation might constitute a public health investment.