

A MATTER OF BALANCE:
Conservation Agriculture in Uncertain Times
(Bringing Conservation Science to Practice)

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Dr. Jeffrey A. Andresen, Ph.D.

Professor and State Climatologist for Michigan
Department of Geography, Environment and Spatial Science
College of Social Science, Michigan State University

Jeff Andresen is Professor of meteorology/climatology with Michigan State University's Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Sciences, Extension Specialist with Michigan State University Extension, and the State Climatologist for Michigan. Prior to his current appointment, Dr. Andresen served with the National Weather Service and with the USDA's World Agricultural Outlook Board in Washington, D.C. He currently serves as director of Michigan's Enviro-weather information system which supports agricultural pest and production management-related decision-making across the state, as co-director of the Great Lakes Regional Science Assessment Center, and as an extension specialist maintaining an active outreach program including dissemination of weather and climate data and related information to the general public and continuing education activities. The primary focus of Andresen's research has been the influence of weather and climate on agriculture, both in the USA and in international production areas.

Mike Buis

Buis Beef
Chatham, Ontario, Canada

Mike is a third-generation cattle rancher from Chatham, Ontario. The family raises cattle to supply their on-farm retail store and several specialty markets with farm raised local beef. Their cropland produces specialty crops of sweetcorn, seed corn and seed beans, as well as, a number of commercial cash crops. Farm tours, demonstration sites and speaking engagements allow Mike to share his strategic use of cover crops and other practices that make cattle farming sustainable on this premium farmland. Mike is chair of Chatham-Kent ALUS (alternative land use services) helping local farmers establish and maintain conservation projects on their land, past president of Ontario Cattlemen's association and involved in numerous other farm organizations.

Dr. Matthew Helmers, Professor

Dean's Professor in the College of Ag and Life Sciences
Professor in the Department of Ag and Biosystems Engineering
Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

Matt Helmers is the Director of the Iowa Nutrient Research Center, the Dean's Professor in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and a Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering at Iowa State University, where he has been on the faculty since 2003. Dr. Helmers' research areas include studies on the impact of nutrient management, cropping practices, drainage design and management, and strategic placement of buffer systems on nutrient export from agricultural landscapes. He has a regional Extension program working to increase adoption of practices that have the potential to reduce downstream nutrient export.

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Dr. Glenn O'Neil, GIS Specialist

Institute of Water Research
Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan

Glenn O'Neil is an Environmental Scientist and GIS Specialist for the Institute of Water Research (IWR) at Michigan State University. For the past 14 years he has helped IWR translate the science of water resource management to on-the-ground conservation in Michigan. He is the primary developer of the Great Lakes Watershed Management System, an online decision support system that links a range of hydrologic models to simulate the impacts of field-level conservation on water resources. The system has been utilized in multiple NRCS and EPA funded conservation projects. He also conducts research on the effects of climate change and best management practices on water quality and quantity in the Great Lakes region. Prior to joining IWR he taught high school Government and Earth Science.

Ryan and Melissa Shaw

SKS Farm
Marlette, MI

Ryan and Melissa Shaw manage and operate SKS Farm in Sanilac County. The farm is located in the Saginaw Bay Watershed with several fields meeting the Cass River. The pair farms 1400 acres of corn, soybeans, and sugarbeets while utilizing cover crops on all acres yearly. After having always been farmed conventionally, the entire farm was converted to strip-tillage in Fall 2014. Over the past five seasons, their soil's health has improved in terms of water infiltration capabilities; increased soil tilth; reduced erosion; growing populations of beneficial microbes, bacteria, fungi, earthworms, and insects; and enhanced nutrient cycling. The noted improvements have only reinforced the need for strategic conservation practices, and the pair continues to transition their farming practices toward a more regenerative and sustainable model. Ryan and Melissa were awarded the 2019 Conservation Innovation Award from The Nature Conservancy. They serve on The Nature Conservancy's Farmer Advisory Group as well as the Farmer-Led Saginaw Bay Watershed Group.