



## Michigan Chapter

Fall 2021

### ***Fostering the science and art of soil and water conservation in Michigan and the Great Lakes Region.***

---

New Year Greetings to all!

The Chapter held its annual meeting remotely on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and took stock of this past year's activities and accomplishments. Documents with details from the Annual Meeting are available on the Chapter website <https://www.miglswcs.org/events-and-archives/>.

One of the highlights of the meeting clearly was the welcoming of new **Executive Council** officers as the Chapter looks forward to their youth and energy while maintaining a core of seasoned veterans. I hope all members will send a welcome note to new President Shelby Burlew, and newly elected Region 3 Director Gary Boersen, and State-Wide At Large Director Steve Schaub! Secretary Dan Kesselring has prepared the following list of our Chapter Officers for Calendar Year 2022.

Shelby Burlew, President

Katie Droscha, President-elect (former Vice President)

Gerald Miller, Vice President (former Region 3 Director)

Glenn O'Neil, Past President

Kelly Goward, Treasurer

Dan Kesselring, Secretary

Dan Busby, Region 1 Director (former State-wide At Large Director)

Zachary Curtis, Region 2 Director

Gary Boersen, Region 3 Director (New on the Executive Council)

Steve Schaub, State-Wide At Large Director (New on the Executive Council)

### **MEMBER PROFILE: 2022 CHAPTER PRESIDENT SHELBY BURLEW**

It's a pleasure to introduce our new Chapter President Shelby Burlew. Thank you again, Shelby for indulging our questions and sharing some of your background, professional views and interests, and we'll never have a sweeter picture in this Newsletter!

1. *Where do you work and what do you do there?* **Answer:** I work for the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) within the Environmental Stewardship Division (ESD) as one of the Verifiers for the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). As a MAEAP Verifier, the region I cover is Southeast Michigan (Hillsdale, Lenawee, Monroe, Wayne, Washtenaw, Jackson, Eaton, Ingham, Livingston, Oakland, Macomb, Lapeer, Genesee, Shiawassee, and Clinton counties). I work closely with the MAEAP Technicians employed through those county Conservation Districts to visit farms and verify practices either on the farmstead or out in the field are being done in a manner to protect groundwater and surface waters.



2. *When and why did you join MI-SWCS?* **Answer:** I joined the Soil and Water Conservation Society Michigan Chapter in early 2018. At that time, I was working as the Livestock Environmental Educator with Michigan State University Extension, and I knew that by becoming a member of the MI-SWCS it would provide me with access to a wealth of information and resources as well as opportunities for professional development and connections to peers with a focus on conservation efforts on farms not only in Michigan but across the country.

3. *What do you see as a major challenge to conservation efforts in Michigan?* **Answer:** Clear communication of conservation practices, benefits and even in some cases return of investment to the farming community is one of the major challenges that I see in getting buy-in (or interest) from farmers and ultimately getting conservation on ground across the state. MI-SWCS is a great platform to tackle this obstacle – this is an organization with a wide range of membership and great expertise. I’ve always believed that it takes everyone from Science/Research to Field Staff (boots on the ground) to build relationships with farmers when it comes to conservation.

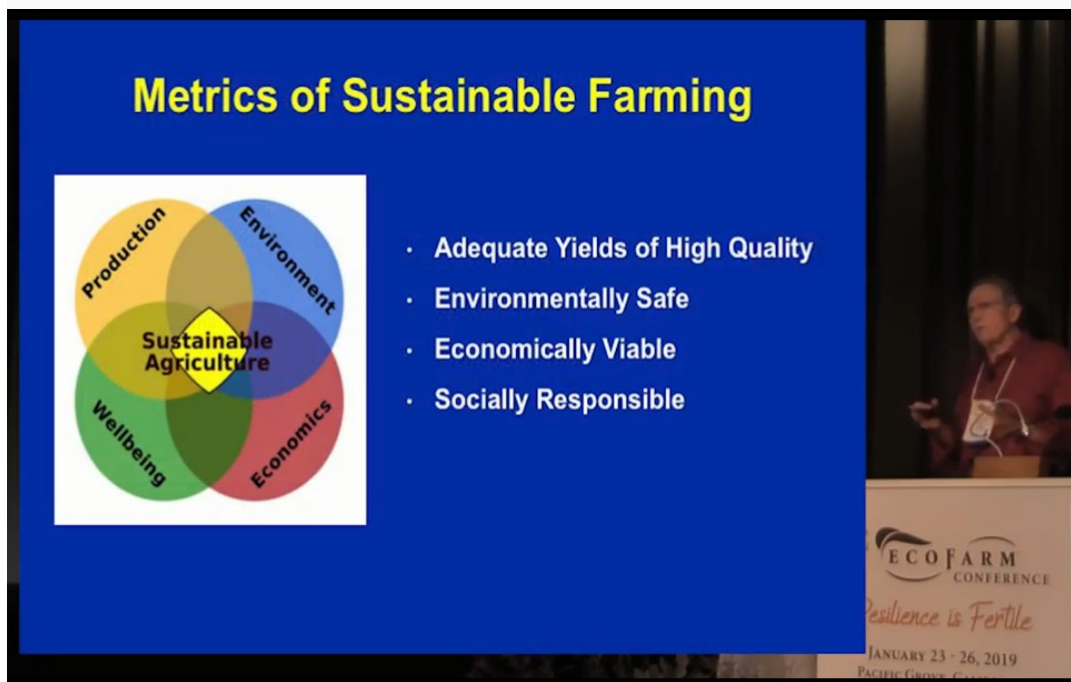
4. *How have you participated in the MI SWCS chapter?* **Answer:** Even prior to becoming a member in 2018, I participated and attended the workshops put on by the MI-SWCS Chapter. When I was a MAEAP Technician (from 2010-2013) and a MSU Extension Educator (from 2013-2018) and even now as a MAEAP Verifier with MDARD, I utilized and still appreciate the professional development opportunities provided by this Chapter.

5. *How do you feel your membership to the MI SWCS is valuable?* **Answer:** Membership to the SWCS and involvement in the Michigan Chapter is incredibly valuable – what you get out of it depends on what you are willing to put into it. There is a wealth of information and resources available, and not only that, but this membership also connects you to so many other professionals within this conservation community. Just attending the workshops alone provides great professional development opportunities. And there are leadership opportunities on the many MI-SWCS Chapter Committees and through the Executive Council as well.
6. *What advice do you have for aspiring or early career natural resource professionals?* **Answer:** 1) Make those connections early on with your fellow peers and resource professionals – whether those be Conservation District Staff, Watershed Groups, State and Federal Agency Partners, Extension Educators, Faculty Staff, and anyone else within the Conservation community. 2) Always seek out opportunities for professional development – never get too comfortable as the world of farming and conservation is always changing and improving. Read up on conservation practice developments, participate in webinars and attend those conferences to increase your own understanding of conservation efforts across the region. 3) Always be mindful of how you plan to take the science and relay it to the farmers to get conservation in the fields. Building trust and a strong relationship with farmers is key to conservation efforts.
7. *Where were you born, and where did you grow up?* **Answer:** My dad served in the United States Air Force, and I was born at the Ramstein-Landstuhl Air Force Base in Germany and lived at the Beale Air Force Base in California. But from about kindergarten on, I grew up in the Quincy, Michigan within Branch County where I spent twelve years in 4-H and three years in FFA. I have also spent time living in East Lansing while attending Michigan State University (Bachelor's Degree in Animal Science), Guthrie (Oklahoma) for an Internship on the Lazy E Ranch and Fort Collins while attending Colorado State University (Master's in Agricultural Sciences). Now I live in Hillsdale County with my husband and daughter (4 ½ years old).
8. *What is your favorite place in Michigan to visit?* **Answer:** Up north is where I love to spend time with my husband and daughter. We love exploring the Manistee National Forest – where we go fishing, hiking, and two-tracking.
9. *What do you like to do in your free time?* **Answer:** Time spent with family is very important to me and I cherish all the memories I can make while watching my daughter grow up. I love being outside and am an avid gardener. Looking forward to entering 2022 with my second year of growing beautiful cut flowers from my garden. It is a pure hobby and I love to share my arrangements with family and friends; and I can't wait to see what more I can do. And of course, incorporating some conservation within my own small garden with soil testing and utilizing cover crops!

10. *Best place to eat in your area, and what to order there?* **Answer:** That is a tricky one! I am going outside the box with this one. I am so lucky to have the career that I do, and I get to travel all over Southeast Michigan visiting farms and finding some great food along the way too! One of my favorite areas to stop and visit and dine at would be within Washtenaw County – Dexter to be exact! What a nice town, and with some great food too. Hotel Hickman Chuckwagon BBQ is pretty good!
11. **Bonus:** *What is your favorite dessert?* **Answer:** Christmas cookies are awesome right about now! My favorite Christmas cookies would be the traditional Italian S cookies. I love to bake so this is a hard one to choose from!

Thank you again, President Burlew! Isn't it great to hear from our members and find out what's going on from their perspective? Plus, one of the compensatory pleasures of travelling for work is finding interesting lunch stops and meeting more of our fellow Michiganders. If you would like to be profiled in the next Chapter Newsletter, send a message to the Executive Council members.

## Perspective: What 40 Years of Science tells us about Organic Agriculture Dr John Reganold – EcoFarm 2019



(Photo source: Dr. John Reganold, 2019 EcoFarm Conference)

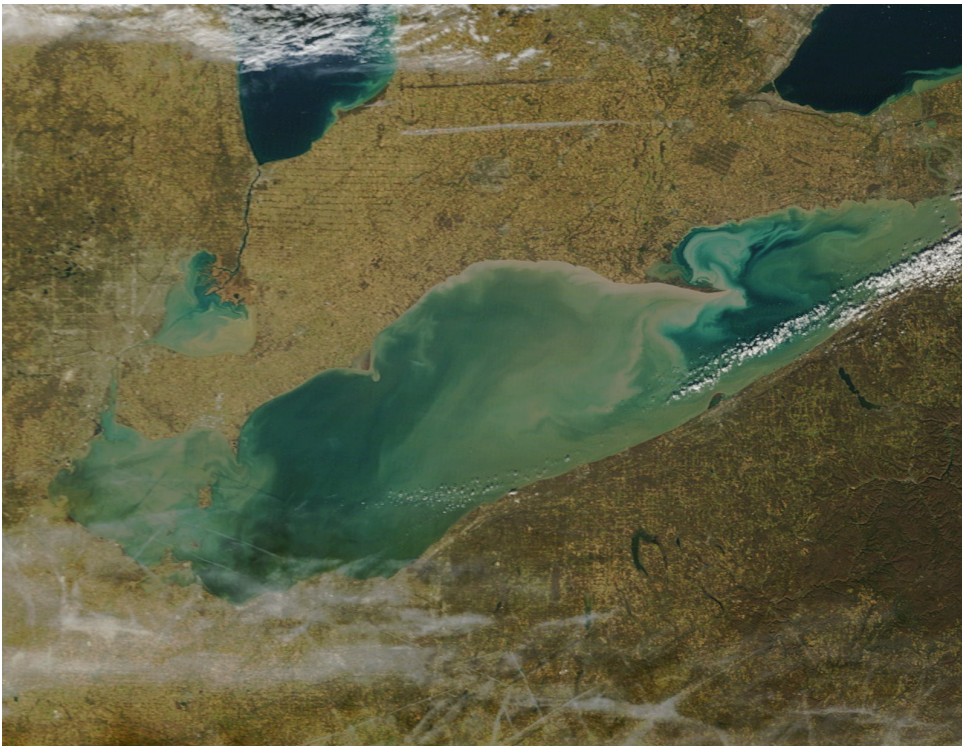
Although this presentation is a few years old, Dr. John Reganold of Washington State University relevantly discusses the metrics or “four legs” of the sustainable farming “chair” and multiple cropping systems. These four attributes represent the ultimate goals of sustainable farming which, according to

Dr. Reganold, are extremely difficult to achieve – but what we should to strive for. Given that farmers may prioritize some but not all of the above goals, Dr. Reganold presents a range of farming practices stretching from organic to conventional in this order: Organic, Agroforestry, Integrated (hybrid) Mixed Crop-Livestock, Perenniation, Conservation Agriculture, No-till, and Conventional. He seems to favor Integrated, which is a certified method in Europe, as it is mostly organic but allows use of some chemicals and tillage. This is the 36-minute video available on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Upmrv3M0K2Q>.

**MODIS IMAGE** This image of Lake Erie was taken on December 17, 2021 on a mostly clear day. The light brown color of the land surface is what's left after fall harvest – a likely combination of bare soil and crop residue. Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair look silty while the southern tips of Lake Huron and Lake Ontario (near the top of the image) look mostly clear. Darker brown shades toward Pennsylvania indicate an increase in woodland land cover. (Photo source: Coastwatch, Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, NOAA.)

[https://coastwatch.glerl.noaa.gov/modis/buf\\_img/t1.21351.1537.LakeErie.143.250m.jpg](https://coastwatch.glerl.noaa.gov/modis/buf_img/t1.21351.1537.LakeErie.143.250m.jpg)



### ***Pictures for the Newsletter***

Have some interesting pictures to share with a Michigan Soil & Water theme? If you would like to share them with the Chapter, please send them to members of the Executive Council.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

*If you are not currently a member of the Soil & Water Conservation Society, membership has many benefits. By joining the national Society, members are automatically affiliated with their state chapters. This is an opportunity to network with professionals in the conservation field and support the Society's critical mission. Information about how to join is available through the link:  
<https://www.swcs.org/get-involved/join/>*

### ***Links of Interest***

**[Michigan Soil and Water Conservation Society - YouTube](#)**

**[North Central Region | Soil and Water Conservation Society \(swcs.org\)](#)**

**[Great Lakes Echo - Environmental news across the basin](#)**

**[Michigan Farmers Union | United to Grow Family Agriculture](#)**

**[American Farm Bureau Federation - The Voice of Agriculture | Homepage \(fb.org\)](#)**

**[W.K. Kellogg Biological Station • Michigan State University \(msu.edu\)](#)**

**[Great Lakes Restoration Initiative | Great Lakes Restoration Initiative \(glri.us\)](#)**

**[Home | Hoosier Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society \(hoosierchapterswcs.org\)](#)**

**[GLIN: Great Lakes Information Network - Great Lakes Commission \(glc.org\)](#)**

**[MSU Water Withdrawal Statistics](#)**

*John Freeland, Newsletter Editor*