



*St. Joseph North Pier Lighthouse, St. Joseph, MI*

*Photo credit: Corey Seeman*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/cseeman/35058094662>

---

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

---

Happy Summer Michigan chapter members! This is the quarterly newsletter from your local chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. As the picture above captures the late part of the day, this newsletter arrives late in the season. In it you will learn about the latest goings-on within the chapter, the latest in soil and water conservation research, and a fellow chapter member. As always, if you are willing to share your own pictures that capture the beauty of water and soil in Michigan, or have an article about related events that you would like to share, please email me so that we can feature them in a future newsletter. Please contact me at [oneilg@msu.edu](mailto:oneilg@msu.edu) with your contributions.

*Glenn O'Neil ([oneilg@msu.edu](mailto:oneilg@msu.edu))*

## Chapter News and Upcoming Events

Even though it technically happened two seasons ago, it's worth reminding the membership that the presentations from chapter's ANR seminar last March are available on the website: <https://www.miglswcs.org/events-and-archives/>. Professor David Karpovich from Saginaw Valley State University talked about water quality monitoring efforts for Saginaw Bay. Professor Robyn Wilson of Ohio State University shared her research exploring the factors that influence a farmer's willingness to adopt conservation. Colleen Forestieri of the Van Buren Conservation District presented on the benefits of combining multiple conservation practices. Professor Randy Schaetzl of Michigan State University provided an overview of Michigan's soils. Jennifer Kanine, Director of Natural Resources for the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi Indians, discussed restoration efforts along the Dowagiac River. And several Michigan producers (John Burk, Blain Baker, and Marilyn and Lee Thelen) shared a window into the conservation activities on their respective farms.



*Farmers discuss their conservation efforts within Michigan's agricultural landscapes.*

It was a bumper crop year for the chapter at the awards ceremony at the Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual International conference in Myrtle Beach, SC. Caryn Dawson of the Ottawa Conservation District earned her certificate for completing the SWCS Emerging Leaders Program. Congratulations Caryn! Also, the chapter won the Exceptional Event Award and (another) Outstanding Chapter Award. Thank you, Caryn, for accepting the awards on the chapter's behalf.



*Clare Lindahl (left, CEO of SWCS) presents Michigan chapter awards to Caryn Dawson (Ottawa County CD MAEAP Technician, SWCS Emerging Leader)*

### *Michigan Envirothon Returns*

Michigan Envirothon held a competition at Michigan State University in May of 2024 and sent the state winners, the VCL Green Team, from Jackson County to the NCF Envirothon held in Geneva, New York in late July. Several members of the Michigan Chapter of the Soil and Water

Conservation Society attended the state competition and served as volunteers in various capacities. President, Steve Schaub assisted as a general volunteer and emcee of the state finals. Kelly Goward, Treasurer, volunteered her time as an exam scorer and as one of the keynote speakers for “conservation career night.” Patty McNinch, one of the Emerging Leaders Program graduates, volunteered as a group leader and resource professional. Our professional development chair, Jerry Miller, was on hand to greet the students, ate lunch with the group and participated in the awards ceremony. Steve Schaub also attended a couple days at the NCF competition in New York. Next year, the state competition will be held at Western Michigan University and NCF Envirothon will be held in Calgary, Alberta. Soil and Water Conservation Society professionals are encouraged to volunteer with team training and at regional and state competitions. Volunteers are also needed to assist in Alberta next summer. Good luck to everyone in 2025! Contact Steve Schaub if you are interested in volunteering for Envirothon at 989-670-0573/call/text.

### *Conservation District Day*

July 17<sup>th</sup> is now officially [Conservation District Day in the State of Michigan](#). From the MACD’s 7/17/24 press release:

“Lansing, MI – The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) is proud to announce Governor Gretchen Whitmer has proclaimed July 17 as Conservation District Day in the state. This recognition underscores the vital role conservation efforts play in maintaining Michigan's natural resources and promoting sustainable practices.”

Michigan SWCS chapter member Dr. Jerry Miller (see member profile below) and MDARD Director Tim Boring were there at the capital to honor the recognition.



*Dr. Jerry Miller (Kent Conservation District) and Dr. Tim Boring (MDARD) in Lansing to commemorate the inaugural Conservation District Day.*

### *Other News and Notes*

On October 17<sup>th</sup>, the US Water Alliance will be hosting its 10<sup>th</sup> *Imagine a Day Without Water* event, an opportunity to learn about and celebrate water conservation efforts around the country. To learn more, visit <https://uswateralliance.org/programs/the-value-of-water-campaign/imagine-a-day-without-water/>.

## **Member profile: *Gerald (Jerry) Miller***

Our member profile for this newsletter is Jerry Miller. Dr. Miller is an agronomist, Chair of the Kent County Conservation District's Board of Directors, and President of the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts. Jerry is an active chapter member, and currently serves on the Legislative and Professional Development Committees. He was recently honored by the Soil Science Society of America for reaching the 30-year mark as a Certified Professional Soil Scientist. Congratulations Jerry!



***Jerry Miller conducting a field day event.***

1. *Where do you work and what do you do there?*

- Retired Emeritus Professor and Associate Dean, Iowa State University. Faculty member from 1974 to 2011.
- Elected to Kent Conservation District Board of Directors, 2014 to present
- Elected Vice-President, Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, 2015-2017; 2017-2019
- Elected President, Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, 2019-2021; 2021-2023; 2023-2025

2. *When did you join MI-SWCS?*

I first joined SWCS around 1971, and then joined the Michigan chapter in 2013.

3. *What do you see as a major challenge to conservation efforts in Michigan?*

The State of Michigan's failure to fund soil, water and plant resource conservation programs on private lands which represent 72% of the area of the state. The water quality issues in WLEB, Saginaw Bay, Macatawa watershed and the other watersheds, all which drained to the Great Lakes, are due to minimal to no investment in cost-share incentives and conservation practices on working lands.

4. *How have you participated in the MI SWCS chapter?*

- First engagement at MI-SWCS summer workshop/tour in 2014 at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo.
- Served as MI-SWCS Chapter Director for Region 3
- Served as MI-SWCS Chapter Vice-President
- Serve as Chair, MI-SWCS Professional Development Committee

5. *How do you feel your membership to the MI SWCS is valuable?*

As a scientist I continue to learn. Remaining active as a professional provides an opportunity to shape the future for soil and water conservation.

6. *What advice do you have for aspiring or early career natural resource professionals?*

Engage with your chosen professional society as part of your career. Read, ask questions, and develop a professional network of mentors and peers. Continue to learn.

7. *Where were you born, and where did you grow up?*

Harrisonburg in Rockingham County, VA, which is in the center of the Shenandoah Valley. Grew-up on an 80-acre farm with corn, small grain, haylage, livestock and

poultry. Worked on the home farm plus grandfather's 70-acre farm and 120 acre rented farmland. My first exposure to soil conservation was when I was 10 or 11 years old, and my dad hosted a field day to install conservation contour strips for field boundaries.

8. *What is your favorite place in Michigan to visit?*

Lake Michigan.

9. *What do you like to do in your free time?*

Read, assist my daughter with her small farm and animals, visit and host my grandchildren.

10. *Best place to eat in your area, and what to order there?*

The Gathering Place in Cascade. Breakfast.

11. **Bonus:** *What is your favorite dessert?*

Apple dumplings with ice cream.

## **JSWCS Highlight**

In prior newsletters, we have featured articles from the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation (JSWCS) and provided summaries of online conservation tools. For this issue we combine those two subjects into one and highlight an article in the most recent issue of JSWCS that featured an online tool. As a reminder, SWCS members have access to JSWCS, where they can learn about the latest research around the globe in conservation science.

In the Jul./Aug. 2024 issue, Dorothy Menefee and Oscar Gallego, both of Tarleton State University's Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research Dakota State University evaluated the ability of the Nutrient Tracking Tool (NTT) to simulate soil organic carbon (SOC) (doi:10.2489/jswc.2024.00042). NTT is a web-based platform that allows users to estimate impacts that various agricultural management practices can have on soil erosion, nutrient

runoff, and crop yields. It recently incorporated an SOC module. The authors identified nine studies from published literature in which SOC had been monitored over a period of at least five years. These nine studies primarily drew from the US Midwest and were conducted at various time periods over the past 40 years. Menefee and Gallego then developed NTT models for each study site and compared the tool's estimations of SOC to what had been observed in the monitoring studies. The authors found that NTT reliably simulated changes in SOC over time and under different conservation practices. Though the sample of sites were skewed toward Midwestern landscapes, the authors point out that the equations driving NTT's SOC simulations have been tested and validated in more diverse climates and landscapes. NTT is free to use but does require a login be set up. You can learn more about it at <https://ntt.tiaer.tarleton.edu/welcomes/new?locale=en>.

## **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, or to me at [oneilg@msu.edu](mailto:oneilg@msu.edu).

## **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 \(gri.us\)](#)

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

[MSU Water Withdrawal Statistics](#)