

Michigan Chapter Summer 2023



Long Lake (Grand Traverse County)

Photo credit: Andy Eick

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/andreweick/1311611905>

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

Greetings Michigan chapter members! A new season means a new opportunity to share the latest in soil and water conservation news, events, research, and tools. Summer in Michigan means trips to the lakes (both inland and Great), fishing, camping, blueberries in the southwest, cherries in the northwest, and prime growing season for the cash crops ... and road construction. All these summer hallmarks (even roadwork) depend upon healthy and well managed soil and water. As it always strives to do, your chapter shares with you the latest from Michigan's soil and water world regarding news, events, heroes, research, and tools. If you are willing to share your own stories, news, events, or pictures from this world please email me so that we can feature them in a future newsletter.

Glenn O'Neil (oneilg@msu.edu)

Chapter News and Upcoming Events

On Friday September 15th, from 1-4PM at the Polkton Township Hall in Coopersville, you can attend a free workshop on anaerobic digesters and learn about the benefits they can yield for farms and the environment.

Manure digesters are becoming an important part of Michigan's diverse portfolio of renewable energy production. These systems are providing farmers with opportunities for additional revenue streams through harvesting bio-gas produced by the anaerobic digestion of their farm's animal manure. However, these systems are complex, have multiple design options, and frequently include the potential for additional treatment options. When designed and operated correctly, anaerobic digesters produce bio-gas that is collected, cleaned, and sold as Renewable Natural Gas. As a bonus, the treatment process can significantly reduce manure bacteria levels, improve the availability of manure nutrients, and reduce manure odors.

In addition to learning about digesters from CJD Farm Consulting, Michigan State University alumni, and Bright Mark Renewal Energy, attendees will be able to visit a new digester in Coopersville.

Here is the workshop registration link:
<https://forms.gle/MjF1gRWXSHSxFDiN8>



James DeYoung,
CJD Farm Consulting

Dana Kirk,
Ph.D. PE /
Consultant
Retired MSU
Faculty



Chapter Highway Cleanup

For the past 30 years the Michigan chapter has participated in the road cleanup program for U.S. Route 127 in East Lansing. Chapter member Gaylynn Kinter has been leading up the effort: "According to MDOT our group is one of the longest contributors to the state's cleanup program." Another cleanup is scheduled for September 11th at 11:00AM, with volunteers meeting at the USDA Office parking lot in East Lansing (3001 Coolidge Road in East Lansing). If you are interested in volunteering, you can reach out to Gaylynn at glkinte@aol.com.



MI-SWCS road clean up volunteers. Front: John Quizler, Gaylynn Kinter, Carol Wade, Debra Bowman; Back: Dan Kesselring, Greg Thoen, Joe Calus, and William Bowman.

SWCS National

On the calendar for the national SWCS office, September includes the latest webinar in the Conservation Matters series. This one focuses on professional development of watershed coordinators as a means to improving water quality

(<https://www.swcs.org/events/calendar/conservation-matters-investing-in-people-to-improve-watersheds/>). September also includes a workshop on starting student SWCS

chapters (<https://www.swcs.org/events/calendar/student-chapter-virtual-training/>). These opportunities are free to members but require registration. Use the links above to sign-up.



Screenshot from the SWCS website about the student chapter workshop.

Member profile: *Tess Van Gorder*

Our member profile for this newsletter is Tess Van Gorder of Michigan Farm Bureau. Tess serves on the chapter's Executive Council as the Statewide At-large Director.



Tess Van Gorder fishing in Manistee Lake near Kalkaska .

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

I work for Michigan Farm Bureau as a Conservation & Regulatory Relations Specialist. I work on a large variety of topics - voluntary conservation to helping farmer members work through regulatory hurdles. My areas of focus are groundwater discharge permitting, the Saginaw Bay, the Michigan Manure Hauler Certification Program, climate/carbon credits/sustainability, and agricultural recycling. I work out of Lansing but cover the whole state.

2. When and why did you join MI-SWCS?

In 2019 I got to attend an SWCS seminar that had great presentations from farmers to researchers talking about conservation. It was a great part of my introduction to conservation. I didn't end up joining until 2022 when there was an opportunity to get more involved in the organization.

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

Funding - funding for technical assistance, funding for research around conservation (and for a diversity of crops and commodities), and funding for cost-share.

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

I am currently the At-Large member on the MI SWCS Executive Council and look forward to attending future seminars and workshops!

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

I enjoy getting to connect with different folks that work in the realm of conservation and it's not always the same folks I interact with in my day-to-day work. It has been a great opportunity to expand my network and to continue learning about important topics in conservation.

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

Relationships are so important - agriculture is a very small world and you never know where you'll end up in your next job or who you'll collaborate with on your next project. Take the opportunity to get to know people (even though networking can be awkward sometimes)!

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

I was born and grew up in Troy, Michigan - no background in agriculture but have always been passionate about Michigan-grown food. My mom would tell you about my long-running obsession with Michigan sweet cherries.

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

My family has a place on Manistee Lake near Kalkaska, MI. I love going there to relax, swim, and spend time with family.

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

I've been a big reader and read every chance I get. I also enjoy cooking and trying new foods, spending time with friends and family, and traveling when I get the chance! Prior to moving back to Michigan for my current job in 2019, I had played water polo in some capacity for about 10 years, so I keep my eye out for opportunities to do that again!

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

My favorite place to eat in Lansing is One North Kitchen & Bar - I don't think I've had a bad dish there yet. They also have a great patio for basking in good weather!

11. Bonus: What is your favorite dessert?

I'm a huge chocolate fan - so you'll likely see me having a chocolate dessert. If I have to get more specific, I made a chocolate (of course) cake from a Julia Child cookbook I had gotten for Christmas and it is still easily the best dessert I've ever made. I made it for a family dinner for my parents' anniversary so that probably wins best dessert based on taste and the meaning behind it.

Thank you, Tess! If Leelanau Conservation District ever wanted to try and pry you from the Thumb, it should apparently start with an offer of pie.

JSWCS Highlight

SWCS members have access to the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation, where they can learn about the latest research around the globe in conservation science. In this section we highlight an article in the most recent journal issue.

In the featured article (doi:10.2489/jswc.2023.00084) of the May 2023 issue, a team of researchers from Colorado State University (CSU), Michigan State University, University of Michigan, and the University of Vermont assessed predictors of cover crop use in the US Midwest. Whereas previous studies looked at cover crop adoption through a binary "yes" or "no" condition (e.g., "Yes, I use cover crops" or "No, I don't"), the team lead by Tian Guo from CSU looked more broadly at the intensity (i.e., the percentage of a farm's acres implemented cover crops) and longevity (i.e., the number of years cover crops were utilized) of cover crop adoption. The authors surveyed over 1,700 farmers throughout the Midwest, including 235 from Michigan in 2018.

Their findings indicated that, unsurprisingly, farmers more familiar with cover crops and who perceive them as beneficial were more likely to adopt cover crops, utilize them intensively, and continue to do so for more years. That trend also applied for farmers using no-till and who incorporated more diversity into their crop rotations (other than corn-soy). Farmers that identified profitability more strongly as the goal for their operation were less likely to adopt cover crops, do so less intensively, and for shorter periods of time. Two statistically significant findings worth sharing with our chapter members were that Michigan cover crop farmers were more likely to implement cover crops more intensively and for more years than the farmers of the other surveyed Midwestern states.

You can access the journal with your SWCS member login at:

<https://www.jswconline.org/content/78/4/335>

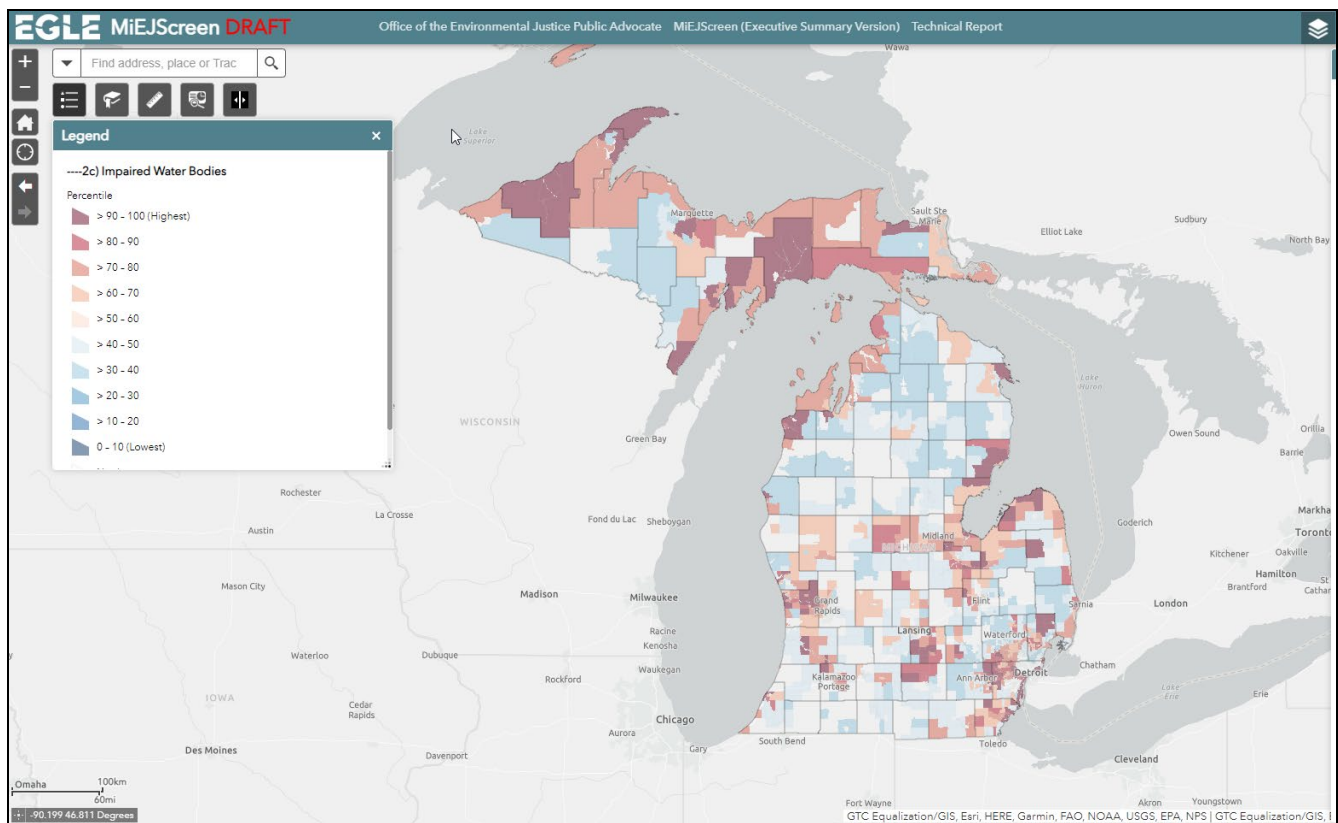
Conservation Tools Highlight

Michigan's Department for the Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) recently released the Michigan Environmental Justice Screening Tool

(<https://egle.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b100011f137945138a52a35ec6d8676f>). The online map allows users to explore various indicators of environmental and socio-economic inequality in Michigan, including water quality in a given area. The screenshot below shows a percentile score for each Michigan census tract on the number of impaired water bodies (as denoted in EGLE's 303d list:

<https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/Organization/Water-Resources/assessment-michigan-waters/integrated-report>).

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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.

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](#)