

SUSTAINABLE INTENSIFICATION OF THE RURAL LANDSCAPE: *Protecting Soil Health, Water Quality and Farm Profitability*

March 7, 2025, Michigan Chapter SWCS ANR Seminar
SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Nathan Ayers, Project Lead
Michigan Agroforestry Partnership

Nathan Ayers is the Director of the Michigan Agroforestry Partnership and advisor to MSU's Agroforestry program. Since 2010, Nathan has led the integration of permaculture, agroforestry and nature-based systems-thinking into many organizations throughout the US. Nathan and his wife own a 20 acre coastal agroforestry farm in Oceana County, Michigan.

Dr. Bruno Basso, John A. Hannah Distinguished Professor
Michigan State University

Dr. Bruno Basso is a Distinguished Professor at Michigan State University. He is an internationally renowned agricultural scientist and crop systems modeler with interest in long-term sustainability of agricultural systems, digital agriculture, circular bioeconomy. His research focuses on assessing and modeling spatial and temporal variability of crop yield, soil organic carbon, GHG emission, water, and nutrients fluxes across agricultural landscapes under current and future climates.

He holds global patents on remote sensing and crop modeling systems for agricultural sustainability.

He is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), a Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy, and a Fellow of the Soil Science Society of America.

He is a member of the Board of Agriculture and Natural Resources of the US National Academies of Sciences.

He has published more than 250 papers. He received his PhD from Michigan State University.

Aron Buechler, Owner
Buechler Farms and Total Solutions Consulting

I own and operate a 3rd generation farm in Bay County. I have worked for numerous large companies in the area in positions such as Mechanical Engineer, Project Engineer and Project Manager. I'm Chair of the Bay County Soil Conservation District, and Vice Chair for Region 6 of the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts. I've been a member of the Bay County Michigan Farm Bureau Board, and I serve on the Bay County Farm Bureau Policy Committee. I'm also a member of the Michigan Farm Bureau NEDRAC Committee and the American Farm Bureau Environmental Regulations and Water Issue Advisory Committee. I've also been involved with the Michigan Manufacturing Association, and the Michigan Chemistry Council. I enjoy spending my free time with my wife of 23 years and 3 children, ages 15, 17 and 18.

Zachary Curtis, Ph.D.
COO Hydrosimulatics INC.

Dr. Curtis is a hydrologist, numerical modeler, and co-founder of Hydrosimulatics INC – a small-business spin-off from Michigan State University specializing in environmental software development and professional consulting. He served as the Region 2 Director of the Chapter from 2019-2024, and is currently President-Elect. He has also served as the Chairperson of the Scholarship Committee since 2020.

SUSTAINABLE INTENSIFICATION OF THE RURAL LANDSCAPE: *Protecting Soil Health, Water Quality and Farm Profitability*

March 7, 2025, Michigan Chapter SWCS ANR Seminar
SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Jason Deshano, Owner
Deshano Farms, Bay County

Jason DeShano is a farmer from Bay County, Michigan, along with his father, Randy, and son Preston, who is the seventh generation on their farm. They grow 3,200 acres of corn, sugar beets, edible beans, soybeans and wheat. Jason has five children: Savannah, Preston, Grace, Stella & Tessa. When they are not busy on the farm, they enjoy spending time together out boating in the summer, and skiing and supporting Preston with his snowmobile racing during the winter months.

Naim Edwards, Director
Detroit Partnership for Food, Learning, and Innovation
Michigan State University

Naim Edwards is an advocate for food sovereignty and resilient local food systems. He studied how to manage urban gardens to support biodiversity, specifically ants and their potential for insect pest control. Edwards is the director of the Michigan State University (MSU) Detroit Partnership in Food, Learning and Innovation (DPFLI), more commonly referred to as the MSU-Detroit Urban Ag Center. Edwards serves the Wayne County community in his role with MSU Extension.

He is responsible for coordinating research, programming, and site development at the DPFLI. The site has been operating since 2019, and regular programming began in Spring 2020. Currently, soil management research projects are underway investigating the effects of tillage, cover crops, and biochar on soil health. Other extension programs beyond agriculture and the food system are offered at the site as well.

Jane Elder, Author, *Wilderness, Water and Rust*
Retired Director of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters
Former National Director of Ecoregion Programs for the Sierra Club

Jane Elder served as executive director of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters for ten years and now consults on environmental and nonprofit strategy and volunteers with groups working on Great Lakes and climate issues. She previously led the Biodiversity Project and headed Sierra Club's Midwest office in Madison, Wisconsin, leading the Great Lakes program. She has written for *Sierra*, *Wisconsin People & Ideas*, and *The Living Wilderness* magazines. She holds degrees from Michigan State University (BA, communications) and University of Wisconsin (MS, land resources), and was awarded distinguished alumni status by the University of Wisconsin–Madison Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies in 2019.

SUSTAINABLE INTENSIFICATION OF THE RURAL LANDSCAPE: *Protecting Soil Health, Water Quality and Farm Profitability*

March 7, 2025, Michigan Chapter SWCS ANR Seminar
SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Tess Van Gorder, Conservation & Regulatory Relations Specialist
Michigan Farm Bureau

Tess Van Gorder is a Conservation and Regulatory Relations Specialist at Michigan Farm Bureau. She collaborates with governmental and non-governmental organizations on opportunities related to environmental research, stewardship, and conservation on farms. Tess provides technical expertise on topics including groundwater discharge permitting, carbon and ecosystem services credits, and water quality and supports the Michigan Manure Hauler Certification Program – a voluntary program for anyone who hauls and/or applies manure. Tess earned a BA in Environmental Policy from the University of Michigan and previously worked at ENGIE Insight, an energy and sustainability management firm out of St. Paul, Minnesota on energy procurement.

Bryan Schwab, Owner
Schwab Farms, Bay County

Bryan Schwab owns and operates a 1300-acre cash crop farm, Schwab Farms, located in Kawkawlin, Michigan, with his son Andrew. They grow sugar beets, corn, dry beans, soybeans, sweet corn and pumpkins. Bryan was employed as an operator at Dow Corning for 10 years. He has been an active member of the Bay County Soil Conservation District Board for over 15 years and has also been active in 4H and the Bay County Farm Bureau.

Sarah Zeiler, President
Michigan Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society
Environmental Management Educator
Michigan State University Extension

Sarah Zeiler grew up in Southern Michigan where she lived on a laying hen and row crop operation. She received her Bachelor of Science in Biology. Having a natural inclination toward land stewardship, she attended Bowling Green State University and received her Master of Science in Ecology. She has been working for Extension for 6 years as an Environmental Management Educator. Previously, Sarah has worked as an engineering coordinator for a local municipality, a biology instructor, a watershed coordinator, and a conservation technician. Sarah's interests are in water quality, nutrient management, and the interface of rural and urban spaces on water issues.