Michigan Chapter of the Soil & Water Conservation Society
ANR SEMINAR
SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION:
Enhancing Soil and Water Quality

March 6, 2026, 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Agro-Liquid Conference Center, 1130 S. Dewitt Rd., St. Johns, MI

PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

Title: **Attitudes, Barriers, and Opportunities Towards a More Diverse Agricultural Landscape: Updates for the Diverse Corn Belt Project**
Emily DeaKyne, Manager
Diverse Corn Belt Project, Purdue University

The Midwestern Corn Belt's longstanding focus on corn and soybean production has cemented its role in the social, economic, and political landscape of the Midwest. However, this system faces growing challenges from climate change, volatile commodity prices, market shifts, and declining rural economies. Research suggests that increasing agricultural diversity could strengthen agronomic, economic, and social resilience in the region. The USDA-NIFA-funded Diverse Corn Belt (DCB) project explores these possibilities by engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders to identify viable pathways for diversification across Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa. This session will share findings from DCB, emphasizing farmer perspectives on market and policy changes needed to enable a more diverse landscape across the Midwest.

Title: **Partnering for Sustainability & Resiliency: Bel's Regenerative Agriculture Initiative for Apples**
John Halverson, Purchasing Category Director, Bel Group

This presentation will showcase Bel's commitment to sustainability and resiliency through its regenerative agriculture initiative for apples. It will highlight the company's collaboration with North American apple growers to implement practical, science-based farming practices that improve soil health, conserve water, and enhance biodiversity within orchard systems.

Title: **Farmer-Friendly Cover Crop Recommendations to Overcome Barriers to Adoption**
Madelyn Celovsky, Conservation Agronomist Educator
Michigan State University Extension

Abstract Pending

Title: **Michigan Irrigation Trends and Research Trends**
Younsuk Dong, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist
Michigan State University

This presentation will look at how irrigated acreage in Michigan has been changing and how MSUE and farmers are working together to use water more efficiently. It will also share our ongoing work to better understand Michigan's groundwater and other water resources using advanced geophysical survey tools.

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Title: **Innovative Irrigation and Water Management in the Saginaw Valley**
Robert Mantey, Ed Mantey and Sons, Inc. – Tuscola County
Makenzi Whittum, Ed Mantey and Sons, Inc. – Tuscola County
Farmer 3 - TBA

Abstract Pending

Title: **Environmental Justice is Essential: Strengthening the Science & Art of Conservation**
Jalonne L. White Newsome, Associate Professor
University of Michigan School of Environment & Sustainability
Environmental Justice Specialization
CEO/Founder, Empowering A Green Environment and Economy, LLC

This presentation will explore the intersectionality of environmental justice, water issues and public health, in a historical, present and future context. It will also offer a set of principles and practices to advance environmental justice and sustainability in the broader conservation movement.

Title: **Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF)**
Application in the Western Lake Erie Basin
Peter Vincent, Environmental Quality Specialist
Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy

Michigan's Nonpoint Source Program has incorporated the ACPF into its Agricultural Inventory Process. The ACPF capitalizes on high resolution digital elevation models and SSURGO soil data to identify candidate locations within the landscape for agricultural best management practices. The ACPF also provides a runoff risk index output, identifying fields that have a higher potential to contribute sediment and nutrients to surface waters.