



Michigan's State of the Western Lake Erie Basin Conference

Advancements in the Watershed

June 23, 2026 | Adrian, Michigan

AGENDA



TIMES	SESSION DESCRIPTION		
9:00 am	Registration and Continental Breakfast		Adrian Tobias Room
09:30 am	<p>Welcome – Alison Bressler, University of Michigan Water Center</p> <p>Domestic Action Plan Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Santina Wortman, Environmental Protection Agency - U.S. Domestic Action Plan, Annex 4, & the WLEB Partnership ◆ Michelle Selzer, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development - Michigan's Domestic Action Plan ◆ Sandra Kosek-Sills, Ohio Lake Erie Commission - Ohio's Domestic Action Plan & H2Ohio ◆ Kristen Arnold, Indiana Department of Environmental Management - Indiana's Domestic Action Plan 		Morning Plenary – Adrian Tobias Room
10:40 am	Networking Break – Move to Breakout Session 1 (3 options)		
11:00 am	Track 1 – Location: Peelle (Room 207)	Track 2 – Location: Jones (Room 110)	Track 3 – Location: Adrian Tobias Room
	<p>Understanding Farmer Motivations and Barriers to Conservation Adoption</p> <p>Learn about a DNR/MSU study on farmer typologies, including factors that influence conservation practice adoption and implications for water quality outreach. In small groups, develop recommendations for conservation programs and engagement strategies tailored to different landowner types. Designed for practitioners working in outreach, policy, and science communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Emily Pomeranz, Michigan State University ◆ Barb Avers, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Michigan State University ◆ Meg Vona, Michigan State University ◆ Steve Chadwick, Michigan Department of Natural Resources ◆ Randy Knapik, Michigan Department of Natural Resources 	<p>Phosphorus Removal Optimization with Secondary Treatment Process Pilot</p> <p>In recent years, changing weather patterns have impacted the influent wastewater characteristics at Detroit's Water Resource Recovery Facility, particularly in the late summer-early fall months. These changes created new challenges to efficient and effective phosphorous removal. To mitigate these challenges and to build resilience in the wastewater treatment process, GLWA implemented a plant-scale pilot test to inject additional ferric chloride chemical in the secondary treatment process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Majid Khan, Great Lakes Water Authority 	<p>Installing and Maintaining Conservation Ditches to Improve Water Quality</p> <p>Learn about conservation drainage ditches, including how they are designed, maintained, funded, and used to improve water quality. A panel of experts will discuss real-world implementation successes, maintenance and cost challenges, landowner participation, funding opportunities, and when conservation ditch practices are, or are not, the right fit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ed Scheffler, Lenawee County Drain Commissioner ◆ Matt Word, Hillsdale County Drain Commissioner ◆ Ehsan Ghane, Michigan State University ◆ Justin McBride, Ohio Department of Agriculture ◆ Les Seiler, Fulton County Farmer ◆ Blaine Baker, Bakerlads Farms
12:00 pm	Networking Lunch		Adrian Tobias Room
12:45 pm	<p>The Future of Farming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Matt Burkholder, The Nature Conservancy 	<p>Fourth-generation Ohio farmer Matt Burkholder shares his conservation journey and the role mentorship, community, and the Farmer Advocates for Conservation program played in helping him adopt regenerative practices. His story underscores the importance of peer support, intergenerational learning, and rural-urban connections in helping farmers support healthier soil, water, and agriculture.</p>	Keynote Address - Adrian Tobias Room

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TIMES	SESSION DESCRIPTION		
1:00 pm	Poster Session and Small Group Discussions		Adrian Tobias Room
1:45 pm	Networking Break – Move to Breakout Session 2 (three options)		
2:00 pm	Track 1 – Location: Jones (Room 110)	Track 2 – Location: Adrian Tobias Room	Track 3 - Location: Peelle (Room 207)
	Designing, Building, and Maintaining Wetlands for Nutrient Reduction Using Seneca State Game Area as a case study, this session explores wetland restoration, including project design, land acquisition, and implementation tradeoffs. Speakers will share data from Michigan and Ohio projects to illustrate how wetlands reduce nutrient loads and what design characteristics make them effective. ♦ Ed Verhamme , LimnoTech, Freeboard Technology ♦ Alex Wieten , Ducks Unlimited ♦ Corey VanStratt , Ducks Unlimited ♦ Timm Appleton , Ducks Unlimited ♦ Kevin Nemer , Ohio Department of Natural Resources ♦ Randy Knapik , Michigan Department of Natural Resources	319 Watershed Management Plans: Design and Implementation Learn how watershed management planning in the River Raisin Watershed, including the role of the watershed council and the 319 planning process. Presenters will discuss how watershed plans guide implementation, funding, partnerships, and water quality improvements. ♦ Brittany Santure , Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy ♦ Pete Vincent , Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy ♦ Sean Dennis , River Raisin Watershed Council ♦ Nick Machinski , Washtenaw County Conservation District ♦ Derek Schlea , LimnoTech	Leveraging Pay for Performance and MI Digital Farm to Manage Nutrients and Yield for Optimizing Profit MI Digital Farms and Pay for Performance are helping improve farm profitability and water quality in the Western Lake Erie Basin. Presenters will discuss data-driven decision tools, financial incentives for conservation practices, and opportunities to apply these tools in practice. ♦ Bruno Basso , Michigan State University ♦ Jeremiah Asher , Michigan State University
3:00 pm	Networking Break - Move to Adrian Tobias Room for Afternoon Plenary		
3:20 pm	Michelle Selzer, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development - Western Lake Erie Basin Program Overview		Afternoon Plenary - Adrian Tobias Room
3:30 pm	Megan DeLeeuw, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development - Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Soil and Water Updates		
3:40 pm	Adam Reimer, National Wildlife Federation - Theory of Change Project Results		
3:50 pm	Jeremiah Asher, Michigan State University - Western Lake Erie Basin Performance-based Conservation Program Updates		
4:00 pm	Ehsan Ghane, Michigan State University - Edge-of-Field Drainage Research Results		
4:15 pm	Angela Blatt, The Alliance for the Great Lakes - Expanded Water Quality Monitoring in the Western Lakes Erie Basin		
4:25 pm	Matthew Conrad, Ducks Unlimited - Wetland Implementation		
4:35 pm	Thad Cleary, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy - Soil Health Investment Program		
4:45 pm	Alison Bressler, University of Michigan Water Center - Closing Remarks		
5:00 pm	Happy Hour		
6:00 pm	Wrap		

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