



Leadership for Midwestern Watersheds

AGENDA

FEBRUARY 25-26, 2026

BARABOO ARTS BANQUET &
CONVENTION CENTER

323 WATER STREET, BARABOO, WI 53913

A NETWORK FOR KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AMONG AGRICULTURAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

Tuesday, February 24th

6:00 PM Pre-event social, hors d'oeuvres and cash bar
(Gem City Saloon & Eatery, 124 Ash St,
Baraboo, WI)

Wednesday, February 25th

8:00 AM Registration and breakfast

Morning Sessions

Welcome and Introductions

*Haleigh Summers & Craig Ficenec,
Sand County Foundation*

The Next Generation of Regenerative Agriculture Partnerships and Priorities in the Midwest

Rod Snyder, Junction Strategies, LLC

Opening Activity

Presentation TBD

Kelsey Ryan, Nestlé Purina

Afternoon Sessions

Coffee Shop Discussion

Farmer leaders from multiple states

A Midwestern Farm Economy Outlook

Paul Dietmann, Compeer Financial

Getting to 'YES' for Conservation

*Serge Koenig, Sauk County Land Resources
and Environment*

Facilitated Small Group Discussions

6:00 PM Dinner and cash bar
(AL. Ringling Brewing Co., 623 Broadway St,
Baraboo, WI)

Optional tour of the AL. Ringling Mansion
(\$8/person)

Thursday, February 26th

7:30 AM Breakfast

Morning Sessions

How Data and Economics Can Maximize the ROI of Conservation and Water Quality Efforts

*Mike Kinney, Comfort Lake-Forest Lake
Watershed District (MN)*

Batch and Build: A Practical Implementation Framework for Watershed Improvements

Chuck Brandel and Erin Dwenger, ISG, Inc.

Batch and Grow: Scaling up Cover Crop Adoption

*Patrick Bula (WI), Scott Hendricks and Allisen
Freihage (IA), Helen VanBeck and Morgan Cauble
(IL)*

Facilitated Small Group Discussions

Closing Activity

12:00 PM Lunch and Adjourn

1:00 PM Optional local farm tour (TBD)

Presented by Sand County Foundation with financial support from the following sponsors





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SPEAKER BIOS
FEBRUARY 25-26, 2026
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Rachel Bouressa - Farmer, Waupaca County, WI

Rachel is a 5th-generation farmer and 2nd-generation grazer in Waupaca County, Wisconsin, where she raises about 100 head of mostly British White Park cattle on permanent pasture, cover crops, and warm-season grasses. She also serves on the state Natural Resources Board, and engages with numerous other organizations regarding water quality and sustainable agriculture. When not working on or off the farm, she enjoys spending time with her two young children and getting time on the water as an avid paddle-boarder, and always strives to look at water each day.



Chuck Brandel, PE - Business Unit Executive, Water Civil, ISG, Inc.

Chuck is a national expert in agricultural drainage and watershed management, recognized throughout the upper Midwest for delivering innovative and practical solutions to complex water management challenges. He works closely with landowners, drainage authorities, watershed districts, and regulatory agencies to guide projects smoothly through planning and implementation. With a forward-looking approach to multipurpose drainage management, Chuck helps projects enhance agricultural productivity while protecting water quality and the environment.



Patrick Bula - Conservation Specialist, Sauk County Land Resources and Environment

Patrick has worked in county and federal conservation since 2017, providing farmers with technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices on working lands and collaborating with producer-led watershed protection groups, including Eau Pleine Partnership Integrated Conservation (EPPIC) and Sauk Soil and Water Improvement (SSWIG). Patrick is also part-owner of Bula's Pleasant Valley Farm, where he manages grass-finished beef and lamb, pasture-raised poultry, crops, and direct-marketing enterprises.



Morgan Cauble - Midwest Watershed Specialist, American Farmland Trust

Morgan's work primarily focuses on assisting producer-led watershed initiatives across Illinois, including the statewide Farmer Led Advances in Soil Health (FLASH) initiative. She earned her Bachelor's degree in agricultural finance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Before joining AFT, she worked in collaboration with the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop conservation plans and assist farmers in working toward their sustainability goals.



Paul Dietmann - Vice President of New Markets, Compeer Financial

Paul leads Compeer's Emerging Markets program, providing loans and business planning assistance to farmers who market their products directly to consumers or who are engaged in value-added production, processing, or marketing. He also leads the co-op's Young, Beginning and Small (YBS) Farmer program. Paul has been helping family farmers with farm financial management issues since the mid-1990s, first as a county agricultural agent, then as Director of the Wisconsin Farm Center, as Wisconsin's Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, and now with the Farm Credit System.



Erin Dwenger - Graduate Engineer, Water Civil

Erin specializes in surface water engineering, focusing on edge-of-field conservation practices like saturated buffers and bioreactors. With expertise in Civil3D, ArcGIS Pro, HydroCAD, and HEC-RAS, she designs solutions that improve water quality and offer cost-effective options for landowners. Her work, centered on agriculture, addresses nitrate pollution in Iowa's waterways. From initial layouts to final designs, Erin ensures projects move swiftly from concept to implementation.



Allisen Freihage - Conservation Planner, Dubuque County Watersheds

Allisen works directly with Dubuque County farmers writing conservation plans designed to improve water quality and reduce soil erosion. She administers the groups educational outreach program and assists with field day and conference planning. She also assists in the creation and promotion of conservation programs within the county and acts as secretary of the Dubuque Farmer to Farmer group. In her free time, she is an avid birder and concert goer.



Scott Hendricks - Conservation Agronomist, Dubuque County Watersheds

Scott works with Dubuque County farmers to identify and implement conservation practices that benefit their bottom line and the county's watersheds. His work focuses on soil health and helping farmers improve their return-on-investment. He also helps implement conservation practices with a renter on his family farm near Dubuque, where he also enjoys hunting and fishing. Scott also loves to travel, hike, and camp.



Mike Kinney - District Administrator, Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

Mike grew up on a Wisconsin dairy farm near Lake Superior. He completed a degree in geology, served in the US Navy, conducted research for NASA on drilling core samples on Mars, taught in Prague, Czech Republic, and helped lead a research team to Lake Baikal in Russia. After receiving an MS in Water Resources Management, he has spent 30 years in watershed management work, currently residing in Forest Lake, Minnesota, while managing a small farm across the St. Croix River in Wisconsin.



Serge Koenig - Conservation Analyst, Sauk County Land Resources and Environment

Serge has been a Sauk County natural resource professional for over thirty years. He has a Watershed Management degree and a Soils Minor from University of Wisconsin Stevens Point. Serge has been working with landowners and various organizations in Sauk County to sustain and improve its natural resources. He is a tireless advocate of managed rotational grazing as tool for regenerating our soils, water and human resources. In his free time he loves spending time with his family gardening, traveling, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting and coaching.



Kelsey Ryan, Ph.D. - Senior Manager of Environmental Sustainability, Nestlé Purina

Kelsey is a food and nutrition professional with experience in research, product development, operations, nutrition, and sustainability. At Nestlé Purina North America, she leads ingredient strategy to promote a resilient food system. She drives progress on environmental sustainability by supporting work on nature, regenerative agriculture, and emissions reduction in the value chain, considering future product and supply needs. Previously, she contributed to the public sector, providing technical leadership on international food assistance products.



Rod Snyder - Principal & Founder, Junction Strategies, LLC

Rod is the principal and founder of Junction Strategies, a consulting firm focused on agriculture, climate, and environmental policy, as well as supply chain sustainability initiatives. He served as Senior Advisor for Agriculture to the Administrator of the EPA during the Biden-Harris Administration and was named the first director of the EPA's Office of Agriculture and Rural Affairs in 2024. Previously, he was president of Field to Market and co-founded the Sustainable Agriculture Summit. Rod lives on his family farm in West Virginia.



Joe Stuckel - Farmer, Iroquois County, IL

Joe farms along with his wife Amber and their six children. They are first-generation farmers, raising corn, soybeans, and cattle. Joe has used cover crops, strip-till/no-till, and adaptive nutrient management since he began farming seven years ago. He also has a seed dealership, and seeds cover crops for many of his neighbors. Joe also works With American Farmland Trust t support Farmer-led groups in nearby watersheds.



Helen VanBeck - Midwest Sr. Program Manager, American Farmland Trust

Helen works with partners across Illinois to advance conservation practices that build soil health, improve water quality, and support climate resiliency. She provides leadership to AFT's Farmer Led Advances in Soil Health (FLASH) initiative, serves as the Manager of the Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership, and sits on the Steering Committee for Illinois Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources (STAR). Helen earned her Bachelor of Science in environmental policy with an emphasis in sustainable agriculture from the University of California, Davis.

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Planning Team:

Chuck Brandel, ISG, Inc.

Catherine DeLong,
Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

Haley Diem, Sand County Foundation

Erin Dwenger, ISG, Inc.

Craig Ficenec, Sand County Foundation

Jenny Seifert, University of Wisconsin-Madison,
Division of Extension

Haleigh Summers, Sand County Foundation

Todd Sutphin, Iowa Soybean Association

Maria Teresa Tancredi, Conservation Technology
Innovation Center (CTIC)