



March 13, 2024

Van Buren Conference Center, Lawrence, MI
Hosted by the Van Buren Conservation District

- 8:30 AM **Registration & Refreshments**
- 9:00 AM **Welcome & District Programs Update**
- 9:30 AM **Is Soil Fertility Being Managed for Your Farm's Next Generation?**
Dr. Alan Franzluebbbers, USDA-Research Ecologist
- 10:30 AM **Break**
- 10:45 AM **Why Soil Health and Why Now? Getting Started in Soil Health Management**
Barry Fisher, Fisher Soil Health LLC
- 11:45 AM **Lunch**
- 12:45 PM **Breakout Sessions**
- Grain Track: Planter Setup for No-Till and Planting into Cover Crop Biomass (Barry Fisher)
 - Grazing Track: Weed Control in Hayfields & Pastures - Helping Ecology Work for You (Dr. Erin Burns)
 - Forest Track: Our Forests & Why We Manage Them (Joseph Lazzari)
- 1:45 PM **Break**
- 2:00 PM **Breakout Sessions**
- Grain Track: Farmer Panel (Cade Klein, Jeff Stuck, Kaleb Kolberg)
 - Grazing Track: Building a Farm with Regenerative Grazing (Nick Rodgers)
 - Forest Track: Hunting Leases: Generate Income and Manage Your Deer Herd (Paul Alvey)
- 3:00 PM **Meet the Speakers**
- Grain Track: Meet the Speakers (Colleen Forestieri, Barry Fisher, Alan Franzluebbbers)
 - Grazing Track: Manure Management & Meet the Speakers (Erin Fuller, Gabe Francisco, Dr. Erin Burns, Nick Rodgers)
 - Forest Track: Forestry Field Day Promo & Meet the Speakers (Lucas Hartman, Kyle Mead, Joseph Lazzari, Paul Alvey)

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SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Keynote Address: Is Soil Fertility Being Managed for Your Farm's Next Generation? (Dr. Alan Franzluebbbers, USDA Research Ecologist)

Session Description: Soil fertility is often associated with nutrient applications from inorganic and organic fertilizers. However, a more holistic view of fertility should consider the physical and biological characteristics of your soil. This presentation will explore the sources of soil fertility and how they can be managed for greater productivity and sustainability.

Bio: Dr. Alan Franzluebbbers is a Research Ecologist with the USDA-Agricultural Research Service on the campus of North Carolina State University. He has more than 30 years of research experience starting with a master's program in Nebraska, PhD in Texas, post-doctoral position in Alberta Canada, and as a full-time soil scientist in Georgia and North Carolina.

Why Soil Health and Why Now? Getting Started in Soil Health Management (Barry Fisher, Fisher Soil Health LLC)

Session Description: Regenerating soil health and functions is the key to achieving full soil productivity and weather resilience. Opportunities and market demand has never been greater for integration of soil health strategies into production systems. Barry will outline the logical first steps and management practices that improve soil organic matter, water, and nutrient cycles. He will provide key management principles necessary in any cropping or grazing system that provides favorable habitat for billions of beneficial soil organisms. Finally, he will discuss practical cropping system strategies to initiate increased soil function.

Bio: Fisher is a retired NRCS agronomist and precision farming specialist based in Indiana. He has worked with thousands of farmers and conducted countless field days, getting his hands in the soil and showing farmers what works and what doesn't when it comes to no-till and cover crops. Barry and his wife practice soil health on their cash grain and livestock farm in West-Central Indiana.

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SESSION DESCRIPTIONS: GRAIN TRACK

Planter Setup for No-Till and Planting into Cover Crop Biomass (Barry Fisher, Fisher Soil Health LLC)

Session description: Most soil health farming systems are founded in low disturbance planting and/or integration of cover crops. This means the planter performance is critical. Considerations for success begins in the fall and with today's available technology, nearly every planter can achieve a great stand through any cover.

Barry will outline logical first steps, equipment set up and strategies that still achieve key planting and even emergence objectives: every seed the same depth, every seed the same spacing, every seed in the same environment, and access to the same resources for every seedling.

Bio: Fisher is a retired NRCS agronomist and precision farming specialist based in Indiana. He has worked with thousands of farmers and conducted countless field days, getting his hands in the soil and showing farmers what works and what doesn't when it comes to no-till and cover crops. Barry and his wife practice soil health on their cash grain and livestock farm in West-Central Indiana.

Farmer Panel (Cade Klein, Jeff Stuck, Kaleb Kolberg)

Session description: In this session, local farmers will discuss what a successful no-till operation looks like. Attendees will have a chance to ask questions of the panel.

Bio: Cade Klein operates a corn and soybean operation in Marcellus, MI, farming about 1200 acres. Cade, his wife Eva, and their two kids also run a direct to consumer cow/calf operation. Cade started farming with his family who were long-term no-tillers. He inherited some no-till fields that are 30 years old and also does some vertical tillage. Cade will share his perspective of coming into an existing no-till operation and continuing to add conservation to his farm.

Kaleb Kolberg and his dad Jim farm about 3,000 acres in Lawrence, MI. Kaleb transitioned to no-till on all of their acres in 2017. Kaleb is committed to his goal of moving their whole farm into regenerative farm practices. The Kolbergs are also working toward more crop diversity, researching organic methods, and considering more specialized crops like black beans and navy beans.

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Jeff Stuck and his son Morgan farm in Marcellus, MI. They farm approximately 2,000 acres of corn and soybean rotation. Jeff and his father started no-tilling in the mid-70s. Jeff will give insight on what works on his farm as a long-term no-tiller.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS: GRAZING TRACK

Weed Control in Hayfields & Pastures – Helping Ecology Work for You (Dr. Erin Burns, Michigan State University)

Session Description: In this session, Erin will talk about weed control in hayfields and pastures. She will also discuss characteristics that make weeds a problem in a forage crop, why weeds have become more problematic in the past few years, how indicator weeds can offer clues to problems in your forage system, and how to use weed biology and life cycles to your advantage for long-term sustainable control.

Bio: Dr. Erin Burns is a Weed Science Extension Specialist and Assistant Professor in the Department of Plant, Soil, and Microbial Sciences at Michigan State University. Erin's research and extension program focuses on current and emerging problematic weeds in Michigan cropping systems, specifically forages, potatoes, corn, and recently industrial hemp. Current research focuses on practices to mitigate the development and spread of herbicide resistant weeds and understanding how climate variability will impact weed biology, ecology, and population dynamics.

Building a Farm with Regenerative Grazing (Nick Rodgers, Farmer)

Session description: Red Leg Farms is dedicated to land regeneration through natural farming practices, resulting in livestock that are not only happy and healthy but also nutritionally rich. As a MAEAP-verified farm, Red Leg Farms truly upholds the highest standards of animal welfare. In his session, Nick will delve into the history of their farm, sharing insights into their journey so far and how they've built the life they have today. He will also discuss their vision for the future of Red Leg Farms, providing a glimpse into what the next few years might hold for them and their beloved farm.

Bio: Nick Rodgers, his wife, Annie, and their family are the proud owners of Red Leg Farms, located in Montrose, MI. They raise Highland cattle, Katadhin sheep, and a diverse flock of layers, all on lush green pastures and plenty of sunshine. In 2019, Nick

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discovered the benefits of rotational grazing and has wholeheartedly embraced this practice on their farm and obtained MAEAP verification.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS: FOREST TRACK

Our Forests & Why We Manage Them (Joseph Lazzari, Consulting Forester)

Session description: The best way to start managing your woodlot is with an in-depth plan. Joe will be discussing the process of working with a landowner to understand their goals for their property, and create a "forest management plan" to guide their activities for years to come. Joe will also discuss a variety of state and federal programs that reward landowners for managing their woods, and help cover the cost of developing a plan. Farmers should consider a "productive woodlot" as a necessary component of their business.

Bio: As the principal and lead consulting forester for True North Consulting Forestry and Wildlife Management, Joe has a passion for sustainable forestry and nature. Joe grew up in Southwest Michigan roaming the family woods and quickly realized he wanted to preserve and manage the forest for future generations. Joe is a graduate of Michigan Technological University with a degree in Forestry and a minor in Ecology. During his time at Michigan Tech, he completed several internships on Isle Royale where he was part of the Wolf/Moose Predator/Prey study. This opportunity helped to further his desire to preserve Michigan's wildlife and forests.

Hunting Leases: Generate Income and Manage Your Deer Herd (Paul Alvey, Land Leasing Agent)

Session description: Base Camp Leasing started as a small company 25 years ago and has grown to be the largest independent hunting lease company in the United States with the #1 focus being to provide the best service to landowners. Paul will explain how Base Camp Leasing can help you unlock potential on your property and realize the value of leasing hunting rights.

Bio: Paul Alvey is the Base Camp Leasing agent for Michigan and Northern Indiana. He has the philosophy that good hunters will treat your property with respect when they have a place they can count on hunting every year.

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