



Leadership for Midwestern Watersheds

AGENDA NOVEMBER 8-9, 2023 THE HISTORIC PARK INN 15 W. STATE ST, MASON CITY, IOWA

A NETWORK FOR KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AMONG AGRICULTURAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

* Presented in conjunction with the Iowa Watershed Academy *

Tuesday, November 7th

6:30 PM Pre-event social (Thai Bistro, 7 S Delaware Ave)

Wednesday, November 8th

8:00 AM Registration and light breakfast (Park Inn)

9:00 AM Morning sessions:

Welcome and Introductions – *Craig Ficenec, Sand County Foundation; and Catherine DeLong, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach*

Understanding and Leveraging Behavioral Styles – *Laura Daniels, Hitch Pin Consulting*

Translating Science into Action for Climate-Smart Agriculture – *Laurie Nowatzke, USDA Midwest Climate Hub*

Facilitated small group discussions

12:00 PM Buffet lunch

1:00 PM Afternoon sessions:

Farmer Leadership Presentations and Roundtable Discussions

- *Seth Watkins, Pinhook Farm (IA)*
- *Bradley Robson, Robson Family Farm (WI)*
- *Wendy Johnson, Joia Food and Fiber Farm (IA)*
- *Dean Sponheim, Sponheim Sales & Services (IA)*

Accelerating Conservation Through Ag Retailers

- *Spencer Herbert, Truterra*

State and Municipal Partnerships for Outcome-Based Conservation

- *Todd Peterson, Sand County Foundation*
- *Harry Huntley, Environmental Policy Innovation Center*

4:30 PM Adjourn

5:30 PM Happy hour

6:30 PM Group dinner
(The Quarry Restaurant & Tapas Bar,
10 S Federal Ave)

Thursday, November 9th

7:30 AM Light breakfast (Park Inn)

8:00 AM Morning sessions:

Watershed Partnership Case Studies

- *Kate Hansen, Center for Rural Affairs (IA)*
- *Beth Barnaski, Jo Daviess County Soil & Water Health Coalition (IL)*
- *Krista Kirkham, The Nature Conservancy, Mackinaw River Program (IL)*
- *Adam King, Dodge Soil and Water Conservation District (MN)*

Incentive Program Updates:

- *Scott Cagel, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships, NRCS (IA)*
- *Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities (speakers TBD)*

Facilitated small group discussions

Tips for Selecting a Decision Support Tool – *Haleigh Summers, Sand County Foundation*

Closing activity

12:00 PM Buffet lunch, and adjourn

Presented by Sand County Foundation and partners, with financial support from Walton Family Foundation and sponsors.





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SPEAKER BIOS
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Beth Barnaski - Jo Daviess County Soil & Water Health Coalition

Beth is a resident of Galena, Illinois and an active volunteer. She became involved in local water resource management issues through the League of Women Voters of Jo Daviess County. Over the past decade, the League has facilitated the development of a county-wide water resource management plan and an Illinois EPA-approved watershed plan for the lower Galena River. Beth serves as Organizing Secretary for the farmer-led Jo Daviess County Soil & Water Health Coalition.



Scott Cagel, Ph.D - Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships, NRCS (Iowa)

Scott developed his partnering skills while serving as an extension county director in Mississippi. In his current duties, he has the responsibility to work with partners to put conservation on the ground in Iowa through the many programs and grant opportunities that are provided through NRCS. Scott is the point of contact for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Conservation Innovation Grants, Iowa Partners for Conservation grants, Watershed Flood Prevention Operations and he organizes the watershed planning efforts through NRCS.



Laura Daniels - Hitch Pin Consulting

Laura Daniels is a farmer, coach, consultant and agriculture advocate. For 15 years Laura served as the General Manager of her dairy, Heartwood Farm. Now, she advises fellow farmers and business owners on team building and strategic planning with Hitch Pin Consulting. Laura founded Dairy Girl Network in 2013 to help fellow dairywomen across the United States connect and succeed. Laura enjoys sharing this passion by giving speeches and leading workshops that inspire many to find their purpose, build their skill and have the confidence to tell their story.



Kate Hansen - Senior Policy Associate, Center for Rural Affairs

Kate works to promote vibrant rural communities through state and federal policy, on topics including water quality, agriculture, conservation, and risk management. Kate has worked closely with Iowa's Watershed Management Authorities (WMA), providing them technical support and advocating for their interests in the Iowa Legislature. Since 2021, she has been involved in the development of the Shell Rock River Watershed Management Coalition, one of Iowa's newest WMAs.



Spencer Herbert - Conservation Agronomist Coordinator, Truterra

Spencer has been with Truterra for five years, working with ag retailers to equip them with tools, services, and funding opportunities to support their growers in implementing conservation. He works with Truterra ag retailers to provide conservation assistance and expertise to growers through employment of a Conservation Agronomist. Spencer assists retailers in accessing funding opportunities, along with providing training, networking opportunities, and ongoing support to Conservation Agronomists within the Truterra network.



Harry Huntley - Senior Agriculture Policy Analyst, Environmental Policy Innovation Center

Harry leads EPIC's focus on federal agriculture policy to encourage adoption of water quality partnerships. At the Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology and the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, he advanced policy to increase the use of agricultural conservation and nutrient pollution trading. At the University of Maryland he managed a research study on the effects of cover crops and nitrogen leaching. He interned with the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, and worked on policy advocacy with the National Farmers Union.



Wendy Johnson - Joia Food and Fiber Farm

Wendy grows corn, soybeans and small grains with her father on Centerview Farms, and organic grains, hay, and livestock with her husband and daughter on Joia Food and Fiber Farm in Charles City, Iowa. They rotationally graze their sheep flock, cows and custom grazed cow/calf pairs, and are investing in agroforestry practices like riparian buffers, enhanced windbreaks and silvopasture. Wendy serves as chair of the USDA Farm Service Agency state committee in Iowa, and leads Climate Land Leaders' work on federal agricultural policy.



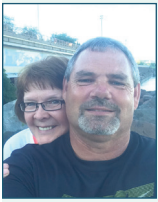
Dr. Laurie Nowatzke, Ph.D - Coordinator, Midwest Climate Hub

Laurie maintains Midwest Climate Hub partnerships, coordinates interdisciplinary projects, and communicates current tools and resources on climate-smart strategies. Previously she served as a project coordinator of water quality research and outreach at Iowa State University. Laurie holds a B.S. in biological sciences from Wright State University, a M.A. in environmental policy from Boston University, and a Ph.D. in rural sociology from Iowa State University, where she researched the barriers and attitudes of farmers who indicate willingness to adopt conservation practices.



Dr. Todd Peterson Ph.D - Water Quality Partnerships Consultant, Sand County Foundation

Todd works to connect cities and water utilities with upstream farmers and agricultural influencers to seek ways to improve water quality. He trained as a crop and soil scientist while earning degrees from Saint Olaf College and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Todd previously developed and adapted agricultural technology tools at the University of Nebraska, Pioneer Hi-Bred, Land O' Lakes and The Nature Conservancy. He is passionate about agriculture and helping farmers reduce their impacts on the environment.



Bradley Robson - Robson Family Farm

Brad grew up on a small dairy farm in the hills of Vernon County, Wisconsin, where he now raises hay, corn, soybeans, small grains, alternative forages, cover crops, prairie strips, and a cow/calf herd on pasture, in partnership with his parents and soon, the next generations of the family. Brad is one of the founders and farmer leaders of the Hill Country Watershed Alliance. He is also Vice-Chair of the Valley Stewardship Network, and a Conservation Agronomist with the Monroe County Land Conservation Department.



Dean Sponheim - Sponheim Sales & Services

Dean Sponheim owns and operates the family's Century Farm near Osage, Iowa with his wife, Cindy, and his son, Josh. He adopted various conservation practices over the years and in 2014 started a cover crop seed business, Sponheim Sales & Services. He is a member of the Rock Creek Watershed Advisory Board, which in 2014 developed the first watershed plan in Iowa based on the state's Nutrient Reduction Strategy Goals. His real passion is helping producers work through the psychological challenges when implementing "Change".



Haleigh Summers, Ph.D - Agricultural Geospatial Data Scientist, Sand County Foundation

Haleigh uses soil and water data and geospatial models to quantify the impact of conservation projects. She obtained her Ph.D. in Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Science at Iowa State University where she also received certificates in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Data-Driven Food Energy and Water Decision Making. Her dissertation work focused on the economics and efficiencies of conservation practice adoption, as well as equitable food-energy-water systems. She has an M.S. in Agronomy from Penn State University.



Seth Watkins - Pinhook Farm

Seth is a fourth-generation steward of his family's farm near Clarinda, Iowa, and the state's first recipient of the Leopold Conservation Award. He is passionate about stewardship of land, restoration of prairie, woodlands, and riparian corridors, and producing an equitable food system. He serves on the board for several nonprofit conservation organizations including the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, the Golden Hills RC&D in rural western Iowa, and the Iowa Learning Farms. Seth lives with his wife, Christy, and their two young children, Spencer and Tatum.

Sand County Foundation thanks the following partners for their assistance in planning this event:

American Farmland Trust • Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship • Iowa State University Extension and Outreach • Iowa Soybean Association • North Central Region Water Network

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