



FUNCTIONING SOIL, THRIVING PEOPLE, VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Friday, Sept. 5, 8 a.m.-7:30 p.m. & Saturday, Sept. 6, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Sinsinawa Mound Center

585 County Rd. Z., Sinsinawa, WI 53824

AGENDA

Friday, Sept. 5

7:00 a.m. Registration with light breakfast

8:00 a.m. Welcome – Tony Peirick & Miriam Brown

8:15 a.m. Ryan Erisman and Treva Wetherell – Planting the Seeds of Thriving

Farming is a tough business and lifestyle at baseline. Uncertainty in weather, markets, and life's circumstances add to the challenges. We often think we can solve a problem with a new tool, a different technique, or more technology; but the most powerful tools for navigating challenges on our farms come from what we put in our heads, not what we put in our sheds.

How we think drives how we see and react to life's challenges. Understanding how our brains work and how we can shift our thinking can help us thrive, even when circumstances seem stacked against us. Thriving isn't about superficial happiness or false optimism but finding fulfillment and inner peace even in the presence of stress, pain, and ongoing challenges. Join this interactive workshop to discover the practices that not only get you through tough times but help you thrive.

Ryan Erisman is a farmer from Sun Prairie, WI, who has led counterinsurgency missions in the Marines, broken bread with enemies he turned into allies, and implemented regenerative farm practices while pursuing a master's degree in social innovation and sustainable leadership. Building on experience from battlefields to farm fields and business to bureaucracy, he helps people discover the perspectives and practices to make high-impact changes that go beyond just improving profit and productivity to creating wellbeing for themselves, their organization, and their community.

Treva Wetherell has spent her professional career helping people move purposefully towards their goals and dreams while navigating the inevitable challenges and changes – planned or unplanned – in their lives with less stress and more ease and flow. She has a Bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Master's degree in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability from Blekinge Institute of Technology in Karlskrona,

Sweden. She also holds professional coaching credentials from the University of Wisconsin Certified Professional Coach Program (UWCPC) and the International Coaching Federation (ICF-ACC). She has also lived in four countries and traveled in more than 33. When she's not coaching, you'll find her traveling far and wide, exploring new places close to home, or spending time outdoors – growing food, hiking, paddling, camping, or sitting quietly on a rock or in a hammock watching the world (or just the Odyssey Farm chickens) go by.

9:45 a.m. Break

10:00 a.m. Keynote: Ann Biklé – Exploring Connections from Soil Health to Our Health

Is it true that you are what you eat? Not entirely. The full story lies in how we grow the crops and raise animals that make their way into our bodies. Anne will draw from her most recent book, "What Your Food Ate: How to Heal Our Land and Reclaim Our Health." Co-authored with her husband David Montgomery, she'll share their journey through recent and forgotten science to highlight the evidence and connections linking soil health to human health. Specific farming practices can support this fundamental linkage—and keep money in a farmer's pocket. The pathway ripples from the soil, winding through the bodies of crops, livestock, and microbiomes, eventually reaching us. These intimate connections reveal a fundamental truth—what's good for the land is good for people too.

***Anne Biklé** is trained in biology and natural history and has worked in the fields of environmental stewardship and planning as well as public health. Through writing and public speaking, she explores humanity's tangled relationship with nature through the lens of agriculture, medicine, and microbiomes. She is particularly enthralled with the botanical world and its influence on humanity throughout history. With the help of mulches and microbes, she has developed gardening practices that build and safeguard soil health. She has coaxed many a plant into rambunctious growth or nursed them back from the edge of death.*

11:00 a.m. Break: book signing and networking

11:30 a.m. Breakout Sessions

- **Seed, Soil, and Stock: The Case for Reconnecting Plants and Animals on Farmland**

Once a common practice, the integration of livestock on farmland has become a relative rarity today. Yet the boost in biodiversity that animals can bring may be the missing link in regenerating soil and creating more resilient farming operations. Chris Wilson, a seventh-generation dairy farmer with Wilson Organic Farms in Cuba City, WI, discusses why he's passionate about getting livestock on the landscape as he shares how they're making it work.

***Chris Wilson** is a commodity risk manager and financial analyst by day and a 7th generation dairy farmer by night. He loves to explore ideas and push thought boundaries. A husband and father of two boys that are the center of my life. I hope to leave an agriculture and food system that meets the challenges of the 21st century head on so my children and theirs may live in a brighter future!*

- **Planting with Purpose: Harnessing the Power of Cover Crops**

Cover crops are more than a seasonal filler—they're a strategic tool for building resilient, thriving soil. In this session, we'll dig into how cover crops feed the soil microbiome, fight plant disease, relieve compaction, reduce erosion, boost aggregate stability, and more. Whether your goal is to protect your fields, improve productivity, or regenerate the land for future generations, you'll leave with practical insights on how to plant with intention and reap the rewards. Presented by Byron Seeds.

- **Improving Life Through Food: Growing Connections from Soil to Table**

Food is more than nourishment; it's a bridge that connects people to each other, to their communities, and to the environment that sustains us. Leslie Shalabi, co-founder of Convivium Urban Farmstead in Dubuque, shares how her organization is weaving these connections through gardening, cooking, education, and shared meals. Explore how intentional engagement with food can strengthen relationships, foster resilience, and cultivate a deeper sense of place.

Leslie Shalabi is co-founder of Convivium Urban Farmstead, a Dubuque-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve life through food. A lifelong lover of food and entertainment, she is dedicated to helping people find ways to connect through the universal languages of food and hospitality. Shalabi was born in Sauk City, Wis., and is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she earned a double major in journalism and anthropology. Her career began in the publishing world, where she worked with trade magazines in the construction industry, eventually transitioning to a leadership role as a partner in an international public relations firm. After 20 years in the corporate world, Shalabi made a significant career shift to pursue her passion for food and community. This led to the founding of Convivium Urban Farmstead, where she now channels her energy into bringing people together through food.

- **From Runoff to Resilience: Farming for a Healthy Water Cycle**

Water doesn't just fall from the sky — it flows through every decision we make on the land. This session unpacks the current state of our water cycle, from nutrient loss to flooding and drought, and reveals the biological processes that keep nutrients where they belong: in the soil, not in our waterways. Learn how specific farming practices can boost water infiltration, improve water-holding capacity, and restore resilience to both your fields and your watershed.

Eric Fuchs is Vice President of the Soil Health Academy Board of Directors and operates a diversified livestock farm in southeast Missouri. For more than 20 years, he has used managed grazing, and for the past decade, he has implemented holistic planned grazing to improve his land's productivity and resilience. Beyond the farm, Eric spent many years in the water and wastewater industry, helping communities and agricultural producers protect vital water resources. That work gave him a clear view: water quality challenges tied to agriculture can be solved through better land management. His path into regenerative agriculture grew from this understanding — recognizing that healthy soil is the key to protecting and restoring water resources.

12:15 p.m. Lunch PLUS annual member meeting

1:00 p.m. Assemble at Main Entrance to board people movers

1:15 p.m. Field Tours

2:15 p.m. Break, reconvene

2:30 p.m. Peter Allen – Becoming Keystone: Restoring Earth's Ultimate Ecosystems

The grassland and savanna ecosystems that covered North America prior to European arrival were some of the most highly diverse, functional, and productive ecosystems on the planet. Their restoration across the landscape is critical for humanity to both recover critical ecosystem services and produce produce nourishing foods capable of supporting human health. Nature alone, however, cannot restore these ecosystems. In this talk, Peter will describe how we can embrace the role of Keystone Species to restore the healthy, productive ecosystems necessary to support flourishing communities.

Peter Allen is an ecologist-turned-farmer and applies his background researching and teaching ecology and complex systems science towards the design, restoration, and management of diverse and agriculturally productive savanna ecosystems. He owns and operates Mastodon Valley Farm, a 220-acre regenerative farm in Southwestern Wisconsin where he has built a timber-frame homestead, planted thousands of fruit and nut trees, and grazes cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and poultry across their fertile valleys, steep hillsides, and restored native prairie pastures. Peter and his wife Maureen grow all their family's food on their homestead and are raising some amazing children off-grid nestled in a grove of oak trees. Peter combines his background with over a decade researching and teaching ecology and complexity science together with a decade of experience farming regeneratively to provide unique and effective consulting and educational opportunities, helping people design, build, and manage diverse, ecologically functional, and economically profitable agroecosystems.

3:30 p.m. Lindsay Rebhan – Thriving Landscapes, Thriving Communities: The Future of Land Transfer

Explore the critical intersection of land transfer, long-range planning, and regenerative agriculture as tools for securing resilient futures for both landscapes and communities. Participants will gain insight into navigating land succession, understanding development and zoning plans, and engaging effectively in community planning processes. We will examine how agricultural easements, when guided by regenerative principles, can protect land from development, support biodiversity, and sustain agricultural livelihoods for generations. We will discuss practical strategies for protecting land and community integrity, ensuring that working lands remain productive, ecologically healthy, and deeply connected to the people who steward them.

***Lindsay Rebhan** is an Ecological Design owner, designer & land coach. She is passionate about the health of land, water and people. She is a steward of the natural world and food systems. She loves supporting others with their land, livelihood, learning and nourishment. A specialist in agroecology, land use, land design, and land management, Lindsay works with gardeners, farmers, food nonprofits, entrepreneurs and Tribal Nations to increase the ecological, human, animal and economic health of land over time. Lindsay co-teaches a Regenerative Farm Design Course at Mastodon Valley Farm. She serves on the Board of BioNutrient Food Association, on Land Team for Commons Land Trust, the Advisory Council for Savanna Institute and is a speaker & leader on Land Regeneration and Ecological Design.*

4:30 p.m. Break

4:45 p.m. Kelly & Deanna Lozensky – IMOS: Harnessing the Power of Nature on Our Farm

Kelly and DeAnna are using Indigenous Micro Organisms Solution (IMOS) on their farm to repopulate the soil with beneficial microbes, accelerate the breakdown of crop residue, improve soil structure, enhance nutrient availability, and stimulate plant growth and immunity. They are passionate about helping other farmers adopt IMOS to build healthy, functional soil systems for both farming and ranching. They began their regenerative journey in 2013 and since 2019 their crops have been fed 100% by native soil biology, sunlight, and rain. In this session, they'll explain how they've managed to eliminate seed treatments, all fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides & pre-harvest desiccants and share the changes they've seen on the landscape as a result.

***Kelly & DeAnna Lozensky** are raising small grains and a family in central North Dakota. Together they steward a 2200 acre no-till plant based, grain farm. Through a system they call IMOS (Indigenous Micro Organism Solution) they are introducing farmers to the potential that native biology can play in their soil systems. Kelly & DeAnna recognized the need for "better" grains and decided to find a way to take a portion of the bushels they grow and sell them directly to consumers, restaurants, and bakeries. This idea evolved into an emerging food brand, Guardian Grains, where they now offer whole grains, stone-milled flour, ancient flaked barley, and whole nutrition artisan pasta made from the French Heritage Rouge De Bordeaux wheat they grow on their farm. Kelly and DeAnna believe that human health, animal health and planet health all depend on soil health.*

5:45 p.m. Networking

6:30 p.m. Dinner

7:30 p.m. Soul of the Soil Concert – Bret Hesla & Six Feet Deep

8:30 p.m. Networking

Saturday, Sept. 6

6:00 a.m. Optional sunrise hike on the Mound

7:00 a.m. Breakfast

8:00 a.m. Welcoming back/announcements

8:10 a.m. Reconvene, small group discussions about takeaways from Day 1

8:30 a.m. Inga Witscher – From Burnout to Backroads: Returning to Myself

In this honest and engaging talk, Inga Orth shares her journey from burnout to breakthrough—from losing herself in overwork, people-pleasing, and perfectionism to reconnecting with her worth, her joy, and her land. As a farmer, cheesemaker, and former PBS host, Inga speaks from lived experience about the emotional toll of constantly pushing through and the powerful process of slowing down, setting boundaries, and rebuilding a life that feels like home. She offers real-world insights into healing from emotional exhaustion, redefining success, and finding self-compassion—without a wellness retreat budget. This is a talk for anyone who's ever felt like they've lost themselves while trying to hold it all together. Expect storytelling, humor, and hard-won wisdom from a woman who's been there—and found her way back.

***Inga Witscher** is a fourth-generation dairy farmer, cheesemaker, author, and award-winning host of the beloved PBS series "Around the Farm Table." After substantially downsizing her dairy herd in 2016, she transitioned from selling milk to producing specialty cheese, while focusing on sustainable practices that benefit her soil, her cows, and the food they produce.*

9:30 a.m. Break

9:45 a.m. Monte Bottens – Biodiversity in Action: Ecological and Economic Wins on the Farm

Monte Bottens believes that farming should always serve the greater good—for the soil, for the animals, and for the environment. In this session, he'll share how his "Do the Right Thing Always" philosophy translates into practical, profitable, and regenerative on-farm strategies. Drawing from his own operation, Monte will explore the ecological and economic benefits of biodiversification, from planting high-diversity cover crops to integrating cattle, goats, chickens, and pigs in managed grazing systems. He'll discuss how tools like virtual fencing make targeted grazing possible and how diversified crop rotations strengthen both soil health and farm resilience. Attendees will leave with inspiration and concrete ideas for building biodiversity into their own operations—while reaping rewards that go far beyond the balance sheet.

***Monte Bottens** is a farmer from Cambridge in Northwest Illinois. At Bottens Family Farm, he practices long term no-till, cover crops, and now integrated livestock on 2,800 acres. He grows non-GMO and food grade corn and soybeans along with small grains, specialty crops, hay, and grazing crops. He is the owner of Grateful Graze, a direct to consumer beef, chicken, pork and eggs business, founder of California Ag Solutions and Ag Solutions Network, host of the AgEmerge Podcast and a regenerative AgTech investor.*

10:50 a.m. Gather at Main Entrance to load onto people movers

10:55 a.m. Field Tours

Noon Lunch

1:00 p.m. Panel Discussion with Moderated Q&A

2:15 p.m. Break

2:30 p.m. John Strauser – Transformative Landscape Change: A History of Change to Inform a Pathway Forward

Countless studies have made it evident that a large-scale shift to a food system that employs agroecological principles will be necessary to address the challenges of the Anthropocene. While such a claim can feel overwhelming, large-scale changes to the agricultural landscape have occurred before. Dr. Strauser will discuss the evolution of the Wisconsin landscape and provide insights on what historically fueled these large-scale changes. Drawing upon these insights, and comparing them to lessons of modern efforts, it becomes evident that there are clear avenues for how we can shift our agroecological system in the coming decades.

***John Strauser** earned his PhD in Natural Resources and Environmental Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has years of experience conducting research, outreach, and strategic land use planning with land grant universities, community watershed groups, and non-profit organizations. Dr. Strauser's research and outreach focuses on the social processes that drive bio-physical landscape change by employing the concepts of place-making. He is particularly interested in the ways places need to be redesigned to create the large-scale agricultural landscape shifts necessary to address issues like farm profitability, water quality, biodiversity decline, climate resilience, and community vitality. Before earning his doctorate, Dr. Strauser played defensive line for the Purdue Boilermakers where he was recognized as a Big Ten Distinguished Scholar Athlete. When he is not working, John enjoys spending time outside fishing, hiking, biking, skiing, boating, and golfing.*

3:30 p.m. Tom Mosgaller – Connecting Soul/Sole and Soil: The Power of Pulling Together

Farming, and being the cultivator of the soul/sole/soil is sacred work. Today more than ever we need to Pull Together and remember the relationship between our souls, the sole of our shoe, and the soil beneath our feet. This closing session is a call to action to make sure what you learned sinks in rather than running off. What did you learn? Why is it important? What are you going to do with it when you get home?

***Tom Mosgaller**, change agent by nature and community builder by nurture, has been working with organizations and communities for decades to improve quality. As past president of the American Society for Quality (ASQ) Tom has had the opportunity to work with organizations in the private, public, and not for profit sectors to improve quality worldwide but nothing satisfies him more than applying quality principles to his farm in the Driftless area of Wisconsin. Tom is author of two books on change: "Bending Granite" and "Pulling Together."*

4:15 p.m. Wrap Up and Adjourn