



REBECCA DROBIS

Protecting the Great Lakes Through a Farm Navigator Network

Nearly one in three farmers across the Great Lakes is over 65 and will likely be transferring their farms in the next 15 years. These farms, and conservation investments on them, are at risk of being converted to real estate development.

At the same time, women, People of Color, and LGBTIQIA+ people are increasingly becoming the next generation of farmers and farmland owners. This new generation has historically been underserved by conservation programs and are often not likely to inherit farms.

These massive challenges present opportunities to promote conservation through successful farm transfers and create more equitable paths to land access in the Great Lakes Watershed.

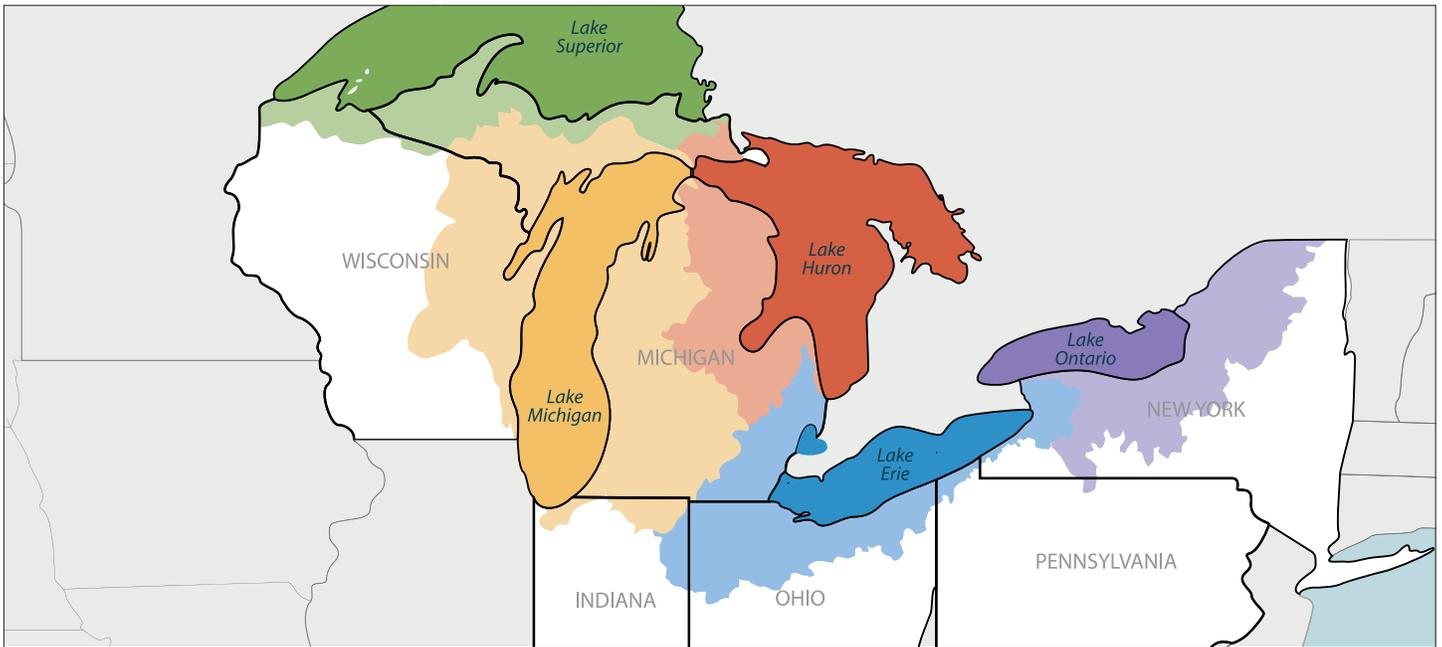


BROOKE DECUBELLIS/NRCS



American Farmland Trust and our project partners will:

- **Convene a network of 30 skilled 'Navigators'** who will be selected for their experience in conservation and/or transfer planning. The skills and local expertise they bring will build the foundation for long-term success of this project.
- **Adapt trainings to integrate farm transfer and conservation planning for farmers and landowners in the Great Lakes Watershed.** Trainings will be designed to support the specific needs of *historically underserved* farmers and landowners.
- **Offer microgrants to farmers and landowners** in the Great Lakes Watershed, to develop and implement farm transfer plans and conservation practices.



The project goal is to support the ecological health of the Great Lakes while sustaining a viable agricultural economy and communities.

TO REACH THIS GOAL, WE WILL:



Connect and support a network of skilled Navigators who will advance an integrated approach to farm transfer and conservation farming practices.

NAVIGATORS WILL:

- Support farmers & landowners to identify goals, assess options, and develop plans.
- Train and advise on conservation and farm transfer planning.
- Link farmers and landowners to programs, resources, and technical experts.



Adapt trainings to integrate farm transfer and conservation planning. AFT uses small group and one-on-one technical assistance to facilitate dialogue and learning among farmers and landowners. In particular, the learning circle model has been well received among adult learners but is reliant on the local professional facilitation skills for long term success.

NAVIGATORS WILL:

- Be trained to facilitate learning circles.
- Host conservation and transfer workshops using a learning circle model.
- Connect networks of women and senior landowners and beginning farmers.



Offer microgrants and technical assistance to beginning farmers and landowners in the Great Lakes Watershed to implement conservation and transfer plans. Funding to implement conservation or transfer plans can be expensive and prohibitive. To alleviate some of these barriers to success, the project will offer financial support along with the technical assistance.

Learn more about this exciting project at farmland.org/greatlakes-network.