



## 2021 Great Lakes Commission Annual Meeting

2021 GREAT LAKES COMMISSION ANNUAL MEETING • OCTOBER 13-14 • ONLINE

### Speaker Biographies

**Sharon Jackson** – *Deputy General Counsel*, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb / Chair, Great Lakes Commission

Sharon M. Jackson is Deputy General Counsel to Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb. She has been in that position since Governor Holcomb took office in January 2017. Ms. Jackson handles a wide variety of policy and legal issues, ranging from utility regulation to judicial appointments to pardons for convicted criminals. She also serves as head of Indiana's delegation to the Great Lakes Commission where she also serves as Vice Chair of that organization.

Prior to joining the Holcomb administration, she served as Deputy Chief Counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives investigation into the 2012 terrorist attacks in Benghazi, Libya. Prior to that, Ms. Jackson was a federal prosecutor in the Southern District of Indiana for 24 years where she handled a wide range of complex white-collar crime cases and national security matters.

**Erika Jensen** – *Executive Director*, Great Lakes Commission

Erika Jensen serves as executive director of the Great Lakes Commission, appointed in July 2021. As executive director, Ms. Jensen directs operations, manages relations with the Commission's Board of Directors and Commissioners, oversees policy and advocacy efforts, and collaborates with the agency's numerous partners to advance strategic regional priorities, among other duties.

Prior to her appointment, Ms. Jensen directed the Commission's aquatic invasive species (AIS) program. In that role she served as coordinator for the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species and Invasive Mussel Collaborative, and was the Commission's designee to the U.S. federal Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force.

Ms. Jensen has been a member of the Commission staff in various roles since 2006. She has a master's degree in environmental management from Duke University and a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University.

**Dr. Chris Winslow** – *Director*, Ohio Sea Grant

Dr. Chris Winslow coordinates Ohio Sea Grant's Great Lakes research with agencies and universities, as well as assists in research, curriculum development, and student recruitment at The Ohio State

University's Stone Laboratory. Dr. Winslow earned his doctorate at Bowling Green State University, with research focusing on interaction between the native smallmouth bass and invasive round goby.

**Matt Komiskey** – *Physical Scientist*, U.S. Geological Survey, Wisconsin Water Science Center

Matt Komiskey is a supervisory physical scientist with the USGS Upper Midwest Water Science Center out of Wisconsin. He coordinates the USGS component of the GLRI Priority Watershed program that is evaluating the effectiveness of agricultural conservation efforts around the Great Lakes.

**Craig Stow** – *Scientist*, NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory

Craig Stow is a scientist at the NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory in Ann Arbor. His research interests include nutrient effects in aquatic ecosystems, model uncertainty and skill assessment, and the integration complex systems and resilience concepts into environmental decision-making. He serves on the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Annex 4 sub-committee, which established the updated phosphorus targets for Lake Erie. Craig began working on Great Lake issues as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Limnology, studying PCB accumulation in Great Lakes fishes. Craig has a B.S. in environmental technology from Cornell University, an M.S. from Louisiana State University in marine sciences, and a PhD from Duke University in environmental modeling.

**Ed Verhamme** – *Project Engineer*, LimnoTech

Ed Verhamme is an Environmental Engineer at LimnoTech in Ann Arbor, MI that has an extensive background in modeling and monitoring the fate/transport of nutrients down rivers and out in to the open waters of the Great Lakes. Recently his work focuses on designing and deploying environmental observing systems to monitor nutrients, harmful algal blooms, and hypoxia on rivers and the Great Lakes. He has developed and implemented real-time buoy networks to support boaters and drinking water treatment plants. In 2020, Ed served as the President of the International Association of Great Lakes Research (IAGLR) and continues to serve on the Board of Directors.

**Dr. Laura Johnson**, *Director*, National Center for Water Quality Research, Heidelberg University

Laura Johnson is director of the National Center for Water Quality Research at Heidelberg University. At the NCWQR, long-term monitoring of streams and rivers is used to examine the influence of human activities on water quality and help decide actions that lead to healthier ecosystems. Laura is best known for research examining the linkages between agricultural runoff and harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie.

Laura received her Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame in 2008 and was a postdoctoral research associate at Indiana University in Bloomington prior to joining Heidelberg University in 2013.

**Zach Schafer** – *Senior Advisor*, U.S. EPA Office of Water

Zach Schafer is Senior Advisor to EPA's Assistant Administrator for the Office of Water, Radhika Fox. The Office of Water works to ensure that drinking water is safe, wastewater is safely returned to the environment, and surface waters are properly managed and protected. Prior to joining EPA, Zach served as the founding Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director at United for Infrastructure and Senior Policy Director for the Council on Competitiveness. Zack also worked on water and climate policy at the White House Council on Environmental Quality during the Obama Administration. He holds a B.A. in economics, international affairs, and history from the University of Delaware and an M.A. in Energy and Environmental Policy from the Biden School of Public Policy at the University of Delaware.

**Katrina Kessler** – *Assistant Commissioner for Water Policy and Agriculture*, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency / Great Lakes Commission

Katrina Kessler was appointed Assistant Commissioner for Water Policy and Agriculture in April 2019. Prior to Katrina's return to the agency, she was the Director of the Surface Water and Sewers Division at the city of Minneapolis. In that role, Katrina was responsible for providing strategic direction for the management of the city's 150-year-old sewer infrastructure along with work to meet climate and water quality goals. Previously, Katrina worked at the MPCA for 13 years as a permit engineer in the Municipal and Industrial Divisions. Katrina also served as the Effluent Limits Supervisor and Manager of the Water Assessment Section in the Environmental Analysis and Outcomes Division.

Katrina has a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Science from American University and a Master of Science in Environmental Engineering from the University of Minnesota. Katrina enjoys swimming, biking, and running outside when it isn't snowing and downhill and cross country skiing when it is. She also enjoys traveling to mountains and beaches with her husband, and their two sons.

Katrina is excited to bring her passion for public service as well as her collaborative and pragmatic problem-solving approach back to the MPCA.

**Mariah Hood** – *Fish Tissue Coordinator/Technical Analyst*, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Division of Surface Water

Mariah Hood is the fish tissue coordinator and a technical analyst for the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Division of Surface Water. She earned her Ph.D. in Biological Sciences from Ohio University, studying how seasonal precipitation variability affect macroinvertebrate and algal communities within acid mine drainage streams.

**Audrey Rush** – *Senior Environmental Specialist*, Ohio EPA

Audrey Rush is manager of the Standards and Technical Support (STS) Section with the Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water. STS is responsible for water quality criteria standards development, NPDES permit variances, the credible data program, fish consumption advisories, risk assessment assistance, and quality documentation.

Prior to joining the Division of Surface Water, Audrey was senior environmental specialist and risk assessment team leader for the Voluntary Action, Remedial Response, and RCRA programs. Her career also includes graduate work with Center for Lake Erie Area Research, Ohio EPA Section 401 coordinator, and environmental consulting performing environmental site assessments, remedial activities, wetland delineations and ecological surveys. Audrey holds a B.S. and an M.S. in zoology from The Ohio State University.

**Michael P. Ripley** – *Environmental Coordinator*, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority

Mike has worked as Environmental Coordinator for the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA) since 1996. CORA represents five tribes in Michigan with regard to the tribes' commercial and subsistence fisheries in the 1836 treaty ceded waters of Lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior. The Tribes comprising CORA are the Bay Mills Indian Community, the Grand Traverse Bands of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians. Mike is a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians and graduated from Lake Superior State University in 1987 with a B.Sc. in Geology.

Mike represents the fishery interests of CORA on the St. Marys River Remedial Action Plan, the LAMP partnerships for Lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior and various other environmental and aquatic nuisance species prevention programs mainly in the Great Lakes Region including the ANS Task Force and the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species. Mike also manages CORA's fish contaminant monitoring program that has allowed the annual analysis of contaminants from tribal commercial fish harvest since 1991. More recently, Mike has been collaborating in research with the Medical College of Wisconsin and Concordia University to determine the nutritive properties of tribal commercial fish harvest resulting in the concurrent publication of papers documenting CORA's fish contaminant data and omega-3 fatty acid content in Great Lakes fish from the 1836 waters.

**Sarah Janssen** – *Research Chemist*, Upper Midwest Water Science Center's Mercury Research Lab

Dr. Sarah Janssen is a research chemist at the U.S. Geological Survey in Madison, WI and the team lead for the USGS Mercury Research Lab. She has her PhD in environmental chemistry from Rutgers University, where she focused on applying isotope tracer techniques to inform remedial and restoration activity within contaminated sites. Her research focuses heavily on the application of Hg stable isotopes for site assessment in Great Lakes Areas of Concern as well as large scale applications to understand the contribution of different mercury sources to the larger Great Lakes food web.

**Alexandra Steffen** – *Lead Mercury Researcher*, ECCC Atmospheric Processes Research Section

Alexandra Steffen (Sandy) has been a researcher on atmospheric mercury for the Air Quality Research Division at Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) for 26 years. Sandy specializes in the transport, transformation and deposition of mercury in and around the atmosphere. She is also an adjunct professor at the University of Toronto (Scarborough). Her work has brought her from her early days in the Great Lakes to all around the high Arctic to now leading a global passive monitoring program for mercury. Sandy has published over 60 peer-reviewed publications, led the Canadian Mercury Science Assessment and several chapters in international assessment reports and has been an expert witness for

government hearings. She spends a lot of her time providing science advice to the government of Canada on mercury cycling in the environment and is actively involved in the negotiations for Canada for the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Sandy has been a member of the ad-hoc mercury expert group for the Minamata Convention and works closely with the National Atmospheric Deposition Network in the US and with the Asia Pacific Mercury Monitoring Network to provide her experience and advice on monitoring mercury in the atmosphere.

**Scott Morlock** – *Regional Director, USGS Midcontinent Region*

Scott is Regional Director for the USGS Midcontinent Region, which encompasses Unified Interior Regions 3, Great Lakes, and Region 5. Scott leads a multi-disciplinary and geographically dispersed organization comprised of six USGS Water Science Centers and five Ecosystems Science Centers across eleven states, from the Rocky Mountains to the Great Lakes. Scott represents USGS on the Unified Interior Region 3 and 5 Executive Field Teams.

Scott started his professional career as a Hydraulic Engineer with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources in 1988. He began his USGS career in 1991 as a Hydrologist with what was then the USGS Indiana District Office. Early in his career, Scott's focus was on the integration of new hydro-acoustic technologies into USGS water monitoring programs. He moved into supervision and leadership in 2003 as a Supervisory Hydrologist, followed by accepting a position as a Deputy Director within the USGS Indiana-Kentucky Water Science Center. Scott joined the former USGS Midwest Region team in 2014 as a Science Coordinator, later serving as Deputy Regional Director for Science.

Scott has done varied details including Acting Center Director of the National Wildlife Health Center, Program Manager for the Water Mission Area's Water Prediction Work Program, and Acting Regional Director. In his Acting Regional Director role, he led the transition of the former Midwest Region to Region 3/5 during the Bureau regional realignment. Scott has participated in many USGS Bureau-level activities during his career and is an author or co-author of thirteen USGS publications.

**James Tierney**, *Deputy Commissioner for Water Resources, NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation / Great Lakes Commissioner*

Jim Tierney serves as the Deputy Commissioner for Water Resources within the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Jim has management responsibility for all clean water programs, including: sewage and industrial wastewater treatment plants; programs to address polluted runoff from concentrated animal feeding operations, construction excavations, and urbanized areas; water quality standards; stream classifications, and water quality assessments. This includes the management of multiple grant programs often exceeding \$100 million, and coordination oversight of the \$1 billion Clean Water State Revolving Loan fund with the Environmental Facilities Corporation.

Jim's portfolio also includes dam safety, levees, flood plain mapping and management, flood resiliency planning, and the coastal erosion hazard area program – areas of responsibility that expanded dramatically after Superstorm Sandy. This responsibility includes the full array of flood mitigation and coastal hazard projects undertaken within New York in conjunction with the Army Corps of Engineers, a total project portfolio that exceeds \$3 billion in value. Mr. Tierney also oversees water supply

assessments and permits, the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Compact, reservoir releases, drought monitoring, and the like.

Jim represents New York's interests on multiple interstate and international commissions with respect to the water quality and water resources of the Great Lakes, Long Island Sound, the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary, the Susquehanna River Basin, Lake Champlain, and the Delaware River Basin. He also oversees DEC's efforts on focused watershed basin programs aimed at protecting and improving such areas as the unfiltered New York City drinking water supply and watershed, Lake Champlain, Chesapeake Bay, the Finger Lakes, Long Island Sound, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, the Mohawk River Basin, and the Hudson River Estuary.

**Hon. Ryan Sorenson, Mayor, City of Sheboygan**

Ryan Sorenson is the 59th Mayor of the City of Sheboygan. He is the youngest serving mayor in the city's history, and he is currently the youngest serving mayor in Wisconsin. Prior to being elected mayor, Sorenson served on the City Council and was the Council President. Mayor Sorenson was born and raised in Sheboygan.

Sorenson graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with his Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and History. While at UW-Milwaukee, Sorenson served as the student body president, and was in the political science honor society.

The Mayor is the CEO of the City and is the head of government. The Mayor is also responsible for managing external relations for the city.

Mayor Sorenson also serves on the Board for the Great Lakes and St Lawrence Cities Initiative, and is on the Executive Committee for the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corporation.

**Hon. Walter Sendzik, Mayor, St. Catharines**

Walter Sendzik was born and raised in St. Catharines. In 2014, as a first time candidate for political office he was elected as Mayor of St. Catharines and re-elected in 2018. As Mayor, Walter brings a strategic focus and business-like approach to City Hall where he has focused on streamlining processes and building a culture of excellent customer service. Since becoming Mayor, the City has approved a new strategic plan and economic development strategy, stabilized tax rate increases and implemented long-term budgeting.

With a background in business, Mayor Sendzik has been a strong advocate for local business and regularly meets with local businesses, employers and investors. Understanding transportation as key for business success and getting people to work, school and services, Mayor Sendzik has led in the transformation of inter-municipal transit from pilot project to a permanent service that will connect all of Niagara's communities. He has helped bring private sector partners to community events and worked with the development community on a new Housing Action Plan.

**Joel Brammeier** – *President & CEO, Alliance for the Great Lakes*

As Alliance for the Great Lakes president and CEO, Joel Brammeier oversees all aspects of the organization, leads a team of professionals across five locations, along with a base of more than 15,000 volunteers around the region dedicated to protecting clean water and building a sustainable future for the Great Lakes. Since joining the Alliance in 2001, Joel has become a leading voice on invasive species and water protection issues across the Great Lakes region. He has testified before Congress on invasive species solutions and advises state governors and Canadian provincial premiers on the implementation of the Great Lakes Compact, a binational agreement that ensures Great Lakes water stays in the basin.

Joel has overseen the longest period of sustained growth in the organization's history and the Alliance has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator every year since he became President and CEO in 2010. Under Joel's leadership, the organization has doubled the size of its full-time staff and quadrupled its asset base. In addition to his leadership at the Alliance, Joel also sits on a number of boards and councils, including Healing Our Waters Governance Board, Governors' & Premiers Maritime Task Force, State of Michigan Invasive Species Council, and Blue Accounting Advisory Committee.

**Dr. Mathew Hauer** – *Assistant Professor of Sociology, Florida State University*

Mathew Hauer is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Florida State University who studies the impacts of climate change on society. Recently, his research has focused on how migration induced by sea level rise could reshape the U.S. population distribution. The New York Times, National Geographic, Time Magazine, Popular Science, USA Today, and others have featured his research. Before coming to Florida State University, Dr. Hauer spent eight years directing the Applied Demography Program at the University of Georgia where he provided valuable demographic research to local, state, and federal governments.