



Introduction to Lakes Online Course Syllabus

Overview

Inland lakes are complex ecosystems and are affected by both the people that live near them as well as the water that drains into them. Michigan has over 11,000 inland lakes and each one provides a unique recreational, scenic, and environmental benefit. The Introduction to Lakes Online course will explore the many dimensions of inland lakes—including riparian rights, shorelines, ecology, aquatic plants, citizen involvement, and much more. This introductory course is designed for anyone with an interest in lakes, including lakefront homeowners and environmental professionals.

Course Content

Introduction to Lakes Online consists of six units. Each unit includes prerecorded video lectures, facilitated discussion forums, exploratory activities, and a quiz. Most of the course content is shared through video lectures, featuring water resource experts from Michigan State University Extension. All lecture videos are prerecorded and closed captioned. The discussion forums serve as an opportunity to engage with classmates and the instructional teams and are a place to share perspectives and pose questions. The quizzes are short, concise, and related to content in the video and activities. The course also includes three pre-scheduled live ask-an-expert webinars featuring experts on unit topics.

What to expect

Access to the course will be provided on a week-by-week, unit-by-unit basis with each new unit opening on Tuesday at 8:00 AM eastern. Every week a new unit will become available. You will not have access to all units at once. Your access to the next unit will be based on completion of the previous unit's quiz. Once a unit is available to view, it will remain open. You can work on coursework at any time; the course site will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is expected that you will complete all course work for the assigned unit per week. Each of the six units will take approximately 2 hours to complete.

Ask-an-Expert webinars

During the course, there will be three live Ask-an-Expert webinars hosted on Zoom. During the webinars participants can type questions to a panel of course instructors and outside experts and the panel will answer the questions verbally. The webinars are hosted every other week. Participation is encouraged, but optional. The webinars are recorded and posted to the course website.

Course Requirements

To receive a certificate of completion you must receive an 80% or higher on each unit quiz. Note that you will have the ability to retake quizzes. It is expected that you will watch all video lectures and complete the activities. You do not have to participate in the Ask-an-Expert webinars to receive a certificate of completion.

Technology Requirements

The course will have links to other websites and documents, some of which are in PDF format. It is recommended that you have the latest version of [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) installed on your computer. The webinars will be hosted on [Zoom](#), a free video conferencing service. Instructions on how to download and use Zoom can be found on the course website.

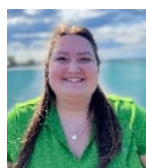
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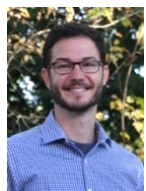
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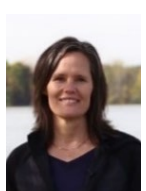
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Course Policies

- **Your participation:** For each unit you are expected to watch the video lectures, take part in discussion forums, complete all activities, and score an 80% or higher on the unit quiz. MSU expects that you will respect the rights of faculty and other students as you take part in the educational process. Be aware that your use of materials and communication tools in this course may be observed and recorded by the instructor and MSU Extension reserves the right to remove you from the course for misconduct.
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Course Schedule

Each course topic opens at 8:00 A.M. on Tuesdays beginning January 26, 2027. Once a course topic opens on the website, it will remain available for the rest of the course.

Open Date	Topic	Description
1/26	Getting Started	Explore the Introduction to Lakes course website and introduce yourself to the class and instructors via discussion forums
2/2	Unit 1 Lake Ecology	An introduction to lake ecosystems and the exploration of basic lake functions
2/9	Unit 2 Watersheds	Primer on the water cycle, hydrologic features of a watershed, and land use impacts to lake water quality
2/16	Unit 3 Shorelines	Review of shoreline features and functions in inland lake ecosystems and best practices to protect water quality and lake habitat
2/23	Unit 4 Aquatic Plants	Introduction to plant identification, short and long-term management techniques, and regulations regarding aquatic vegetation in Michigan lakes
3/2	Unit 5 Water Law	Summary of federal, state, and local laws regarding riparian rights, navigability, and permitting on inland lakes in Michigan
3/9	Unit 6 Community Involvement	Review of institutions involved in lake management, coordinating with other lake groups, and components of a lake management plan
3/26	Certificate/CEU deadline	To receive a Certificate of Completion or Continuing Education Credits all course requirements must be met by this date

Ask-an-Expert Zoom Webinars

- February 17 Noon to 1:00 PM - Unit 1: Lake Ecology and Unit 2: Watersheds
- March 3 Noon to 1:00 PM - Unit 3: Shorelines and Unit 4: Aquatic Plants
- March 17 Noon to 1:00 PM - Unit 5: Water Law and Unit 6: Community Involvement