



Van Buren Conservation District

October 2022 Program Update

Submitted by *Emilly Hickmott, Deputy Administrator*

We're so excited to brag about our very own Senior MAEAP Specialist, Kyle Mead! As most of you already know, Kyle is a great member of our team and an excellent community member. Kyle was recently recognized with a Fruit and Vegetable 40 Under Forty Award for the Class of 2022. We are so proud of him and the work he does serving Van Buren County; please join us in celebrating Kyle! You can learn more here: <https://fruitgrowersnews.com/article/40-under-40-2022/>

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) – The Van Buren Conservation District staff worked this month to recruit farmers to plant cover crops after corn and soybean harvest. In certain watersheds, farmers are eligible for cost share to plant cover crops. Cover crops build soil health, reduce erosion and help recycle nutrients in the soil. This fall, about 514 acres of cover crops were planted in Van Buren County after the cash crop was harvested (in addition to about 5,500 acres planted pre-harvest via airplane).
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area)** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Justin Paltre*) – October saw the wrapup of the field season for the CISMA. It was also filled with grant writing and grant reporting. At the end of the month, CISMA staff was able to attend the Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference to connect and engage with invasive species specialists across the Great Lakes region.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) – October is the start of the new fiscal year and Kyle started out by calling all of the MAEAP Verified farmers that were due for Re-Verification and attempting to schedule out as many appointments as possible. These visits were scheduled for the month of October, some for the following month in November, and some were set out to be scheduled in the beginning of December. The MAEAP goal setting was productive and was followed up with a meeting with the new MSUE Fruit Agent to talk about how MAEAP works and how she can help get farmers involved with MAEAP as well as a scheduled meeting with Farm Bureau to talk about collaboration with VBCD and MAEAP.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman*) – All existing Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts with NRCS certified and in good standing for calendar year 2022.
- **Natural Resource Conservation Service Technical Assistance (Gabe Francisco)** – Corn Count “It’s Corn!” – During this month of November local farmers have been busy harvesting corn and soybeans around our and neighboring counties, maybe you have seen the great big combines rolling along in the field, leaving a cloud of dust and chaff in its wake. This month, the technician had the opportunity to visit with some of these farmers while they have been hard at work and assist them with an important end of the year task every good farmer should be knowledgeable of, the harvest returns on their crops! With the help of Senior Conservation Specialist Colleen Foresteri and Kami Williams of the Van Buren NRCS office we were able to measure many different fields. Good job to our hard working grain farmers on a tough growing season!



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- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - October public engagement consisted of Macroinvertebrate Stream Sampling, writing two Conservation Corners, and work on upcoming publications and a workshop. Planning for 2023 Backyard Symposium web series is in full swing. VBCD 2023 Calendar and 2022 Annual Report saw significant progress.
- **Resource Recovery Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall*) - October marked the end of our collection season for Van Buren COnservation District's Resource Recovery Program. We finished out strong with our new Recycle Roundup location at the Van Buren ISD Conference Center in Lawrence, MI. We had a total of 253 participants show up to Lawrence where we had our first collection of Styrofoam™ (polystyrene). The remainder of the month was spent preparing 2023 Scrap Tire Grant and editing the Recycle Guide.