



Van Buren Conservation District

August 2023 Program Update

Submitted by *Emilly Hickmott, Deputy Administrator*

District staff continue to host events through the end of summer, all while preparing for the end of our fiscal year in September. With the year transition, we are planning events and programs for 2024. If there is a service, information, or event that you're hoping to see from the District, please don't hesitate to reach out and share your ideas.

Our annual meeting in July was excellent, despite the stormy weather. The Van Buren Conservation District named Tim Kling as our Conservationist of the Year for 2022 in recognition of his commitment to keeping materials in the circular economy and his contributions to making recycling accessible for Van Buren County. The Van Buren Conservation District named Mike & Casey Bozung our Farmer of the Year for 2022 in recognition of their commitment to sustainable agriculture at home and in their community. Be sure to congratulate these well-deserving community members when you see them!

Upcoming District Events:

- Recycling Collections
 - Passenger/Semi Tire & Electronics Collection | September 21 Porter
 - Recycle Roundup Collections | October 14 Lawrence
 - <https://vanburencd.org/van-buren-county-recycling-collections/>
- Cleanup Events - Volunteer Opportunities
 - River Cleanup in Paw Paw | September 16 | 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM | 269-633-9052
 - Trail Cleanup in Covert | September 29 | 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM | 269-633-9052

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - In July, the District partnered with the Van Buren County Farm Bureau to host a tent for "Kid's Day" at the Van Buren Youth Fair. Ag and Water Quality staff assisted with this event where kids rode tractors around a farm setup collecting produce then selling it to a market for a prize. Kids were then able to look at real life bugs and pick out a magnifying glass and fake bug to take home.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area)** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson, Caleigh Dahn*) - July is the month when invasive species fear the CISMA Team. We hit the ground hard with treatments throughout the service area, targeting our highest priority species. Our education efforts spanned from water to land as we tabled at boat launches and visited private landowner properties. We joined our sister CISMA Teams from throughout the state to combine our skills and knowledge.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - July was busy with VBCD events, two days at the fair and the annual meeting kept the specialist occupied between farm visits. On July 27, the specialist showed a professor from Boston two of the farms that would be part of the Conservation Innovation Grant that will utilize drones to map soil moisture. This professor is the lead for the grant and wanted to see soil structure, rooting characteristics, and canopy of the plants. This grant process has been going on for close to two years now with a payoff within the next year that will give the growers data on their fields.



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- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman*) – VBCD outreach efforts have resulted in 12 applicants already interested in enrolling in programs provided by the new Farm Bill.
- **Natural Resource Conservation Service Technical Assistance** (*Gabe Francisco*) – This year the technician was able to return to his roots and help volunteer with the Van Buren County 4-H and this July was their annual Youth fair. It was great to be able to assist in all the capacity I could, and see so many familiar faces of friends I grew up with and showed against who are now there with children of their own!
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) – Public outreach for VBCD programs saw great strides with invasive species events, recycling events, and other VBCD programs. Planning for the 2023 Annual Report, 2024 VBCD Calendar, and 2024 Food, Farm, & Fun Guide has begun.
- **Resource Recovery Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall*) – The Resource Recovery program joyfully held our Paw Paw Large Tire Event. We collected a lot of tractor tires in the two day period, completely filling two semi trailers to the max. The latter half of the month focused on helping with the VBCD annual meeting, assisting residents with questions, and prepping for 2024 collection planning.