



# Van Buren Conservation District

## January 2023 Program Update

Submitted by *Emily Hickmott, Deputy Administrator*

Happy New Year! District staff is hard at work preparing for another year of excellent events. Be sure to keep up to date with all that is coming via our newly available printed calendar (available in our office and in county/township/city/village offices) or our virtual one ([www.vanburencd.org](http://www.vanburencd.org)). The District's pre-order tree seedling sale is now live online and in the office; pre-orders close April 7, so order while supplies last!

### Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - In December 2022, staff wrapped up a three-year grant project funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The focus of this project was reducing polluted runoff from farm fields by working with farmers to install conservation practices. Highlights included cost sharing 4,800 acres of cover crops, 500 acres of no-till, and hosting 9 educational events for farmers. Nearly \$150,000 of the grant was used to pay farmers for conservation practices, which helps overcome the financial risk of adopting a new practice into the farm system.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area)** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian*) - As the cold weather set in this past December, CISMA staff continued to manage invasive species. At the beginning of the month, CISMA staff teamed up with EGLE to hand-pull parrot feather from the only known site in our three county area. The CISMA also gave some presentations, and prepared for our annual meeting on January 12th. Weekly contracted work began with CISMA partner, Chikaming Open Lands, to manage invasive species at one of their preserves.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - December was a bit slower than November. The technician attended 2 of the 3 days at GLEXPO in Grand Rapids. He attended educational sessions, talked with farmers from Van Buren County and worked the MAEAP booth. VBCD Staff also attended the 40 under 40 awards ceremony and had dinner in Grand Rapids on Tuesday night. Calls and emails have been completed and four Verifications are scheduled for January, these Verifications are 3 Re-Verifications and 1 new Verification.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman*) - NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) 2023 Applications Update: 34 Applications pending for funding consideration in the first round of 2023. Practices include those that support grazing, forestry, row cropping, and fruit production.
- **Natural Resource Conservation Service Technical Assistance** (*Gabe Francisco*) - This past month the NRCS team has been hard at work getting documentation and eligibility filed for all of our 2023 program applicants. Here we go for another fun year of helping farmers, and putting conservation practices into action for our community!
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - VBCD Calendars are delivered and available to the public. The 2022 Annual Report will be finished soon. 2023 projects and grant preparation saw significant progress. Backyard Symposium webinar series will come out in February.
- **Resource Recovery Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall*) - Big news from the state was released, the legislation concerning updates to materials management have been passed, and many big changes will take place to meet the new recycling goals. The VBCD had to make the decision to change the date for our Paw Paw Recycle Roundup Collection to June 24. With the change, the team was tasked with



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challenges for promotion and confirming the date change with all other site hosts and vendors. Now we are confirmed and excited for the 2023 recycle season.