



# Van Buren Conservation District

## February 2023 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Deputy Administrator

January was a great month for the VBCD staff to prepare for a full year of events! We're looking forward to our farmer-focused conference, Farming for the Future, on March 7 at the Van Buren Conference Center and our Volunteer Appreciation & Recruitment Night on March 22. We ask folks to RSVP for these free events because space is limited and food will be provided. Our tree seedling sale continues through the end of April 7. Species will sell out, so order soon! Keep an eye on our calendar here:

<https://vanburencd.org/my-calendar/>

### Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - Most staff time in January was occupied with planning future educational events, including the Farming for the Future Conference, which will be held in March. Planning included tasks such as developing the agenda, finding speakers to fill breakout sessions, and designing and mailing invitations and brochures. Staff also collected soil samples from several local farms that will be analyzed and discussed at the conference.
- **SWxSW Corner Cisma (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area)** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian*) - In January, the SWxSW Corner Cisma held its 2023 Annual Meeting, where we connected with partners and gave updates on Cisma activities. Cisma staff also attended the 2023 Michigan Invasive Species Coalition annual meeting to learn about updates on invasive species statewide. Strike team job descriptions were posted and promising applications have been received.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - January was a productive month; the technician attended several planning meetings for the VBCD's Farming for the Future event that is to be held in March, conducted several assessments and reassessments on farms and had two farms get reverified.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman*) - The Inflation Reduction Act will make more funding available to conservation program applicants nationwide.
- **Natural Resource Conservation Service Technical Assistance** (*Gabe Francisco*) - The technician began working on a grant pre-proposal application for a National Fish and Wildlife Federation grant in the conservation practices and regenerative agriculture category.
- **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.
- **Resource Recovery Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall*) - January was another important month for resource recovery. The Rural Electronic Recycling Grant was received and work was able to start! We got the new year-round permanent electronic collection site opened at South Haven Senior Services Center. This month we also were able to open all nine of the battery recycling drop off stations at most of the libraries in Van Buren County. We were also excited to be able to check in with the Hartford High School Go Green Club who recently was awarded a mini grant to start a school recycling program and are off to a fantastic start!