



Van Buren Conservation District

September 2023 Program Update

Submitted by *Emily Hickmott, Deputy Administrator*

Our outdoor events are wrapping up for the year soon, and we continue to plan for next year's programs and events, complete grant reports, and apply for new grants. With our fiscal year transition in October, we have an additional announcement. As the VBCD team has grown, the Board of Directors has seen the need to add an Executive Director position, and I have been promoted to fill this position. Administrator, Kim Sinclair, will continue on in this capacity with a strong focus on financial management and growing and diversifying the funding sources of the VBCD. You can read the whole press release on our website. <https://vanburencd.org/news/> 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.

Upcoming District Events:

- Recycling Collection - please encourage signing up for tires by October 12
 - Recycle Roundup Collections | October 14 Lawrence
 - <https://vanburencd.org/van-buren-county-recycling-collections/>
- Volunteer Opportunities
 - Trail Cleanup in Covert | September 29 | 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM | 269-633-9052
 - Stream Health Monitoring | October 1 | 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM | 269-633-9044

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - The Van Buren Conservation District staff held an on-farm field Day on August 17 with over 60 attendees. Staff presented information on the MAEAP program, drainage water management and antimicrobial resistance. Attendees toured the farm to see and learn about benefits of cover crops and other conservation practices installed by the host, Stochierro Farms.
- **SWxSW Corner Cisma (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area)** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson, Caleigh Dahn*) - August was a busy month for the Cisma team. After receiving the contract for the US Forest Service GLRI grant, treatments and surveys for that grant were able to begin. The team also held hikes and paddles to help folks learn about invasive species on the land and in the water. Work has also begun on treatments for the Van Buren County Road Commission. Conversations with the Van Buren Drain Commissioner are underway regarding surveys and treatment options for Japanese knotweed and invasive Phragmites within county drains.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - August was a bit slower for farm appointments, assessments, and verifications but this is because the specialist was putting the final touches on and preparing for the MAEAP Field Day at Stochierro Farms. The Field Day was a success with many new farmers attending and filling out Phase 1 contact forms so that they can begin their work on a MAEAP Verification. The specialist has worked hard this year trying to get as close to 100% of the Re-Verifications done as possible while also looking for new Verifications. The MAEAP Tech Consistency training was a good day of networking with the other SW Technicians and training on how technicians can assess and report our work to the same standard.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman*) - Conservation Stewardship Program Enrolment completed for FY2023. 771 new acres engaging in enhanced conservation practices until 2027.



Van Buren Conservation District September 2023 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Deputy Administrator

- **Natural Resource Conservation Service Technical Assistance** (*Gabe Francisco*) - An additional applicant was selected for funding bringing approximately another \$20,000 into the county for area farmers, bringing the yearly total that NRCS was able to help cost-share for area farmers well past the \$1.5 Million.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - Many well-attended and impactful events happened in August: South Haven Farmers Market, MAEAP Field Day, Hike and Paddle with a Naturalist. Planning for upcoming publications and events saw significant progress in Tree Sale, annual report, and 2024 calendar.
- **Resource Recovery Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) - In August, the team had a great time holding the 2023 Recycle Roundup Collection Event in South Haven. Tons of materials were collected at the event where 200 households were serviced. The quarterly report was presented to the Van Buren County Commissioners. Also presented was an opportunity to work with Southwest Michigan Planning Commission for the Materials Management Planning process for a multi-county materials management plan.