



## Van Buren Conservation District December 2024 Program Update

*Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director*

Greetings everyone! With the potential for federal government shutdown, the Van Buren Conservation District staff has prepared to continue our work from home. Our office at 1035 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw will be unavailable to us while the federal government is shut down. We can continue to be reached by our work cell phones and email addresses – all available here: [VanBurenCD.org/about](http://VanBurenCD.org/about)

We have two exciting things that will go live on our website January 1 for you to share with your communities – our annual Tree Seedling Sale and a Conservation Needs Assessment Survey. Details below and fliers coming to your office soon! Wishing you a wonderful start to 2025 – thank you for all of your service to our community. We look forward to seeing you in the new year.

**Tree Seedling Sale:** The annual VBCD Tree Sale opens January 1, 2025! We are excited to once again provide you with quality, affordable seedlings. Your purchase reforests our community and supports local conservation! Our new and classic tree and shrub species provide a wide variety of options to meet your needs. The bonus is they are all great for our environment and wildlife!

- Flowering and ornamental species
- Nut and fruit-producing species
- Species to block wind
- Shade tree species
- High value lumber species
- Species for erosion control
- More!

Be sure to check out our accessories. Show your support of local conservation efforts and action! Whether you're new to Tree Sale or want a reminder, read more about our sale here: <https://vanburencd.org/shop/> The pre-sale with close March 30, and we will sell out of some species. Have questions? Contact Outreach Coordinator Jacob Diljak at [Outreach@VanBurenCD.org](mailto:Outreach@VanBurenCD.org) or call 269-633-9052.

**Conservation Needs Assessment Survey:** We, at the Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD), are looking to hear from you! Take our quick survey to guide conservation in Van Buren County. Whether you live, work, or play in Van Buren County, we need your input. Your thoughts help the VBCD better serve you, our community, and our natural resources.

The VBCD brings programs, services, education, and events to our community. To address our local needs, we need your local voice. Your input helps us focus conservation funding and programming for Van Buren County. This quick survey takes about 10 minutes. All responses are anonymous. For assistance with the survey, contact us at [info@VanBurenCD.org](mailto:info@VanBurenCD.org) or call 269-633-9054. Complete the survey to be entered into a drawing for special prizes! Take the survey by May 31, 2025! <https://vanburencd.org/input/>



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### **Program Updates:**

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - In November, the Ag and Water Quality team focused on planning outreach and education events for 2025. This includes finding speakers as well as sponsors and grants to support these events. We look forward to hosting a conference for local farmers as well as field days and small grower meetings in the coming year.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) - In November, the CISMA team shifted into reporting and planning season. We looked back on the past year and reflected on what we can improve for next year. The team also attended the Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference in Duluth, MN. We also began winter survey and treatment work for our GLRI grant and for right of way projects.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - Working on getting out to farms that are due for reverification or that have lapsed for various reasons. MAEAP has also assigned some new training that they would like all techs to attend, some of which have already been completed (Database Training) and some that are upcoming (Regen Ag) in December and January. There is a lot of work to be done in Cass county. Some of those producers have been contacted already and have had initial visits completed; some I have yet to reach out to due to the upcoming holidays and training. I have also scheduled a training that I will be conducting for the brand new (4-5 weeks on the job) techs in Kent and Allegan. We will utilize, past tech, Mike Ludlam's farm to conduct an assessment from scratch with Mike playing the role of the farmer to help these new techs learn how to conduct an initial visit and what to look for when at the farm.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) - Gabe and Lucas have had a busy and productive November indeed! This month was the application deadline for the 2025 IRA EQIP "Climate Smart" funding pool and together we had a total of 15 landowners interested in applying for this fund pool within our county. We also had two great Outreach and Education opportunities with Gabe presenting at the MACD Annual Fall Conference, and Lucas presenting at the Forestry Field Day.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - We are working on next year's events, publications, and more! Stay tuned for more coming your way. Our annual Tree Sale opens January 1st. Shop seedlings and more while raising money for local conservation! Head to the shop in 2025: [VanBurenCD.org/shop](http://VanBurenCD.org/shop)
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) - As the year quickly comes to a close, the Resource Recovery Team has been able to reflect on the year's accomplishments and work on next year's goals and planning. Progress has begun on the long-awaited Materials Management Planning Committee with the first meeting and VBCD Recycling Coordinator Kalli Marshall being named as chair of the board. The Recycling Infrastructure Grant projects continue as some projects finish like Paw Paw Township and others keep checking items off the to do lists. We are hopeful to have all the projects complete early spring for folks to take advantage of the new recycling opportunities.