



Van Buren Conservation District

July 2022 Program Update

Submitted by Emilly Hickmott, Deputy Administrator

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The Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD) reminds the public that they are invited to this year's annual meeting, director election, and picnic to be held on July 27, 2022 at 5:00 PM (with an optional tour at 4:30 PM) at the Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery. The Van Buren Conservation District staff has begun First Aid/CPR/AED Training and is keeping active with several summer events: Wednesdays at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery; Van Buren District Library Pop-up Lit Labs & Hikes with a Naturalist; Clean, Drain, Dry Landing Blitzes; recycling collections; and more! We hope to see you out and about this summer.

The upcoming MAEAP Fruit Field Day is designed for fruit growers on August 10th from 4:30 PM to 7:00 PM at Oxley Farms (29001 CR 358, Lawton, MI 49065). Attendees can expect free dinner and refreshments. The event brings together speakers from the VBCD who will discuss a wide range of topics concerning fruit farmers. Some topics that will be presented are the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP), cover crops in fruit rows, Farm Bill cost-share opportunities, pesticide container recycling, and how to prevent the invasive species Spotted Lantern Fly.

"By bringing farmers together with good food and hands-on learning, we hope to initiate changes to their farming practices," said MAEAP Technician Kyle Mead of the VBCD. Kyle Mead brings 18 years of conservation experience to Van Buren County to assist farmers. For more information on the MAEAP Fruit Field Day, contact the VBCD office by phone at 269-657-4030 x5 or by email at maeap@vanburencd.org. Pre-registration is required for attendance.

Program Updates:

- **Administrator** (*Kim Sinclair*) - We have reached an agreement with Van Buren County to continue to act as the County's Solid Waste Designated Planning Agency and provide resource recovery programming for County residents and landowners. This has been a multi-year project culminating with the unanimous decision by the Board of Commissioners to partner with the VBCD and increase funding for FY 2023. We are finalizing our agreement with the Van Buren County Road Commission for Invasive Species Management on Van Buren County Roadways. We are also excited to have interest from the Berrien County Road Department for similar management. We are out in force right now. Between landing blitzes, hikes, and paddles; booths at events and farmer's markets; and recycling collections, you're bound to run into one of our staff. We are looking forward to our Annual Meeting, MAEAP Fruit Field Day and healthy water week!
- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Hannah Hudson, Carlie Southland*) - Watershed Coordinator Erin Fuller gave a brief presentation and hosted a table at the Gravel Lake Association annual meeting on June 22, sharing information about natural shorelines and keeping our lakes clean. Conservation Technician Colleen Forestieri continued recruiting farmers to participate in cost-share programs to install conservation practices on their fields. Ninety-three acres of no-till were enrolled this month to reduce runoff and improve soil health.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area)** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Justin Palthe, Lance McCarty*) - The SWxSW Corner CISMA is surveying rights of way and



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private properties and planning for the 2023 season. They also are engaging the public about invasive species through a variety of events and presentations.

- **Education & Water Quality** (*Carlie Southland*) - Conservation Associate, Carlie Southland, finished her water sampling project with Two Rivers Coalition. She also began her summer education programs with Van Buren District Library, South Haven Memorial Library, and Lawton Schools. She has participated in Pop Up Lit Labs in partnership with Pullman Linking Center and Bangor Schools. She is continuing to water sample at a local farm.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - Kyle and Lucas continued to co-visit farms and properties, Kyle has been putting the final touches on his summer field day which included the planting of cover crops at Oxley Farms. The cover crops are a total of ten acres of grape middles.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman*) - The technician attended the "Diggin' Into Soil Health" workshop at the Kellogg Biological Station. The event was attended by a wide range of stakeholders to discuss perceptions of soil health, soil health plans, conservation practice effectiveness, and other topics.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - After returning from the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts Summer Conference, there was significant progress in event planning and program and grant support. Stay tuned as we attend farmers markets to promote local food and the local economy!
- **Resource Recovery Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall*) - June was an impactful month for the recycling program. We held the first Recycle Roundup of the year at Van Buren Community Mental Health in Paw Paw which was very successful with a record 402 participants. We collected and diverted 15.13 tons of tires, 4,800 pounds of shred paper, 9,340 pounds of electronics, and 24,929 pounds of household hazardous waste from landfills! Kalli also completed and submitted an electronics recycling grant to supplement and expand the electronics recycling program.