



Van Buren Conservation District April 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

On April 8-13, Van Buren Conservation District staff were out of the office to have our annual **Tree Seedling Sale**. This year, we sold and donated over 19,000 tree seedlings! Thank-you to everyone who came out and supported this year's event!

Mark your calendars for our Volunteer Appreciation & Work Opportunity event at Thunderfoot Farm (32323 M-43 Paw Paw MI 49079)! Come join us on May 15, from 11:00 AM-1:00 PM, for a fun event on the farm. We will have food, information on volunteer opportunities for the year, and fun farm activities.

Recycling collections have begun and details for all events have been posted at <https://vanburencd.org/van-buren-county-recycling-collections/>. Please encourage folks to sign up their tires ahead of time! In May and June you can find us...

-Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronics Collection | May 21, 2024 | 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM | Arlington Township Transfer Station | 51998 26th Ave., Bangor, MI 49013

-Recycle Roundup Collection | June 15, 2024 | 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM | Van Buren Community Mental Health | 801 Hazen Street, Paw Paw, MI 49079

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) – In February, the Ag & Water Quality Team helped coordinate our annual farm conference, "Farming for the Future." More than 120 people came together on March 13 to learn about understanding your soil, improving soil health, cost share opportunities, and more. Keynote speakers included soil researcher Dr. Alan Franzluebbers from North Carolina and soil health consultant Barry Fisher of Indiana. VBCD staff also shared new research and cost-share programs that can offer funding to farmers to try conservation practices. Additional speakers presented during breakout sessions targeting grain, grazing, and forestry topics.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) – The SWxSW Corner CISMA Team has taken advantage of important meetings and training opportunities to best engage with our community and prepare for the field season. Both attending and leading events, the CISMA Team is spreading the word and building knowledge of the ever-changing world of invasive species.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) – March was the month that saw payoff for a lot of work being done throughout the year. 26 verifications were scheduled over 3 verification days with MDARD employee Josh Appleby. 3 Verifications needed to be rescheduled and 2 didn't quite meet standards and will be reassessed and hopefully verified soon. On top of all the verifications, the MAEAP Specialist helped with Farming for the Future and also organized and led the Region 4/6 Envirothon Competition at Kalamazoo Nature Center which had 42 competitors and several volunteers from VBCD, Kent CD, and private companies like Four Elements Energy and True North Consulting Forestry.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCs) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) – The VBCD's annual Farming for the Future conference on March 13 was a major

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success for targeted resource concern outreach by our conservation technicians. Gabriel and Lucas organized separate tracks related to conservation in grazing and forestry respectively. 124 people in total attended the event with the majority of landowners seeking additional information on incorporating livestock, and improving grazing systems.

- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - The 2024 Food, Farm, & Fun Guides are here, so be sure to stop by the VBCD or municipality offices or one of many advertising businesses to get your copy! Keep an eye out for our upcoming events.
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) - Spring is quickly approaching and we will be starting the collection season soon. Most of the month was filled with preparations for collections, infrastructure grant work, and materials management planning. With part 115 updates, transfer stations are now going through a new site registration and review process. Kalli assisted communities with these challenges and helped them get started on the process.