



Van Buren Conservation District

July 2025 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our Annual Meeting and Director Election at the Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum last week! It was a great (and warm!) evening to award our Conservationist of the Year and Farm of the Year. You can find more details about those awardees on our website at VanBurenCD.org/about.

Summer lets our staff get into the field more often than the winter season, which is where we love to be. Please invite us to your events, properties, and meetings if we can provide support for your water, land, farming, recycling, and invasive species concerns. Contact information is available at VanBurenCD.org/about to find out how our team can best help you.

Upcoming Events:

- **[South Haven Recycle Roundup](#)** | Saturday, August 2, 2025 | 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM | South Haven Public Works | 1199 8th Ave., South Haven, MI 49090
 - Tires (pre-register required, [click here](#) or call 269-633-9314)
 - Electronics
 - Foam
 - Household Hazardous Waste (HHW): oil-based paint, batteries, lightbulbs, and more
- **[Maple Lake Cleanup](#)** | Saturday, August 9, 2025 | 9:00 – 1:30 PM | Sunset Park, Paw Paw, MI 49079
- **[Discover with the District: Paddle Fish Lake](#)** | Wednesday, August 13, 2025 | 5:30 PM – 7:00 PM
- **[Sustainable Samplers](#)** | Wednesday, August 20, 2025 | 5:00 PM – 7:30 PM | Paw Paw Brewing Company | 780 S Gremps St., Paw Paw, MI 49079
- **[VBCD Board Meeting](#)** | Wednesday, August 27, 2025 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM | VBCD Office | 1035 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079
- Labor Day | Monday, September 1, 2025 | office closed

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller and Colleen Forestieri*) – Senior Conservation Specialist was featured in the June edition of the Michigan Ag Advancement newsletter:

“Our June Partner Spotlight is Colleen Forestieri!

Colleen was born and raised in Southwest Michigan. Her first job was working retail on a fruit farm in Berrien County, where she developed an early appreciation for her region’s unique crop diversity. She attended Western Michigan University, earning degrees in Biology and Environmental Studies. From there, she worked at the Kellogg Biological Station conducting agricultural research, and later moved to Washington D.C. to work in policy with the Environmental Protection Agency. Eventually, her passion for local agriculture and conservation brought her back to Michigan, where she now serves as a Senior Conservation Specialist at the Van Buren Conservation District. In this role, she works directly with farmers to implement on-farm conservation practices.”
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) – The CISMA Team was in the thick of surveying for high-priority species this

1035 E. Michigan Avenue, Paw Paw, Michigan 49079

269.657.4030 x5 ♦ www.VanBurenCD.org ♦ info@vanburencd.org



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June. Neither Hydrilla nor spotted lanternfly have yet been detected in our area. In the midst of work, we've also reported on accomplishments and successes of high priority invasive species outreach and treatment efforts. During our annual Landing Blitz, we educated boaters on avoiding the spread of invasive species between lakes at Van Auken Lake, Fish Lake, and Jasper Dairy boat launch.

- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) – With most of the conventional MAEAP goals being met or close to being achieved, the specialist is working on finishing up the fulfillment of the Regen Ag goals. 11 farm surveys have been turned in – exceeding the goal of 10. The specialist has turned in 3 soil analyses towards the goal of 9, and the goal for soil health assessments done in the field is 50% complete. These need to be done within the growing season, so the specialist is working hard to secure producers that are willing to have these done as well as schedule them. Each field assessment takes about 1.5 hours to complete including collection of the soil analysis sample.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) – The month of June was fairly calm for both Lucas and Gabe from the Conservation District and NRCS side. We spent a lot of our time getting Kami adjusted to her new role as acting District Conservationist and supporting her in what she needed. Gabe spent the month helping the Van Buren Youth Fair set up and get participants ready for the 2025 fair which will be from July 12th – July 20th. This year we are hoping to once again purchase a pig for the Annual Meeting from a local 4H kid. More details to come in the next few months on upcoming Farm Bill programs. Deadlines anticipated in the fall.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) – We love to see people out-and-about at our events and presentations – recently Senior Services luncheons and Paw Paw Recycle Roundup. We continue to bring you, our community, valuable services, education, and resources. Stay up-to-date with our programs, services, and events – VanBurenCD.org
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) – Get ready, get set, let's go! June was a busy month full of education and the first Recycle Roundup of the year. Recycle Roundup was a successful day with over 280 households served. Education events kicked off at Lawton Library where Kalli shared recycling fun with our youth. Huge progress was made at the Accelerator Academy with Nextcycle as we worked through options and future goals for the Van Buren County Resource Recovery Program.