



Van Buren Conservation District November 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

Welcome to all of the newly elected and returning elected officials! We look forward to working with you to serve your community and conserve soil and water. Improvements to several transfer stations continue, and we are excited to see more folks using the additional recycling services. Please let us know if you have any questions about these changes. Even if you don't have a transfer station or yours was not updated through our grant, we have options for your residents to recycle. In other news, our field staff continues to do winter invasive species treatment work and conduct surveys so we can target treat species during the summer. On November 23, we had a Forestry Field Day with about 50 attendees. They learned ways to improve the health of their forests with and without federal funding. Our technicians are happy to chat with anyone curious about these options. We're in the office a bit more these days than in the summer, so please give us a call for any of your soil, water, plant, agriculture, wildlife, and energy concerns.

Year-round Recycling: These services are available at no direct cost to all Van Buren County residents and landowners. Services made available through EGLE grants, VBCD Operations millage, Van Buren County funds, and municipal contributions.

- **Electronic recycling** | Available year-round at:
 - Community Thrift Shop | 1000 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw | Call 269-657-4186 for hours
 - Senior Services of Van Buren County | 8337 M-140, South Haven | Call 269-468-9476 for hours
- **Year-round tire recycling** | on hold until spring
- **Battery recycling** | Available year-round at:
 - Hartford Public Library
 - Paw Paw Public Library
 - South Haven Senior Services Center
 - Van Buren Conservation District Office
 - Van Buren District Library Branches: Antwerp Sunshine, Bangor, Covert, Lawrence, Webster Memorial (Decatur)

Food, Farm, Fun Guide Advertising Due January 15: We work with you but also our farms, food and drink producers, and plant nurseries and florists. The folks who work with and steward our shared natural resources every day. We promote these awesome folks with our Guide and marketing. Local conservation done by supporting our farmers, bolstering our local food system, and promoting business working with our land and water. The bonus is we're not push-y, the profits are for our advertisers and not in selling ads. The Guide also promotes our county's public green spaces, museums, festivals, and non-profits working in natural resources. How you can help:

- Share this information!
- Print and hang our flier (see attached)
- See or share the Food, Farm, & Fun Guide for yourself:
 - Food, Farm, & Fun Guide (webpage and digital booklet): VanBurenCD.org/food-farm-fun
 - Advertising information: VanBurenCD.org/2025-fffg-advertise



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Could You Help Us Connect with Lake Associations?: We have some grant work coming up in the next year to help lake homeowners keep their lakes healthy. We want to make sure we have contact information for all of our inland lakes, so that we make sure to invite them to events and send them educational information. If you have lake associations in your township, would you please put us in touch with them? Just email me at director@vanburencd.org. Thank you!

Energy Saving Home Upgrades: The State has announced a statewide energy savings rebate program to rollout in 2025 to help homeowners and renters transition to energy saving upgrades to homes. More details can be found here: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MIDEO/bulletins/3bebf23>

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - In October, the Ag and Water Quality team kicked off a new grant project, "Connecting lake associations with their upstream watersheds in southwest Michigan." The project is funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative through the US Forest Service and will fund the planting of 4,900 trees and shrubs near six lakes in southwest Michigan to reduce polluted runoff.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) - The field season has officially come to a close, and the CISMA Team has pivoted to grant writing, reporting, and reflecting. We spent October cleaning up our data and equipment - making sure everything is complete and ready to be used in 2025. Our work has largely shifted to office tasks, as we're in the beginning stages of organizing plans and activities for the winter and the next field season.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - The specialist is trying to have another productive year. He has already reached out to several farmers about Re-Verifications that are due in FY25. The specialist also took initiative and mapped out dividing lines for Cass County as Van Buren, Berrien, and St. Joe counties will be sharing those duties. All techs agree with the lines drawn and agree to work with each other, communicate contacts, and share producers that may have personal relationships with another tech not assigned to the area.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) - October marks the beginning of a new fiscal year for USDA-NRCS conservation programs. The Paw Paw field office is off to a great start with over 50 new and deferred applications for a variety of natural resource concerns and projects.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - Publications and event planning are underway. Watch out for what the VBCD has coming up!
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) - In October, we held the last Recycle Roundup event of 2024. Residents from all over the county came to our new site at the Lawrence ISD Tech Center. Kalli also had the opportunity to attend a national recycling summit in partnership with The Recycling Partnership to learn and hear updates from the entire recycling industry.