



# Van Buren Conservation District

## June 2023 Program Update

Submitted by *Emily Hickmott, Deputy Administrator*

District staff is in the field more and more as farm field days, recycling collections, educational presentations, naturalist events, invasive species treatment, and summer school programming kicks off. If you are hoping to connect with a particular staff member, please be sure to set an appointment so you're sure to reach them. You can find up to date contact information for all staff members on our website: <https://vanburencd.org/about/>

### Upcoming District Events:

- Summer Programming at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery | June 29 and August 10 | <https://vanburencd.org/summer-education-2023/>
- Recycling Collections
  - Passenger/Semi Tire and Electronics Collections | June 29 Covert, August 24 Bloomingdale, September 21 Porter
  - Recycle Roundup Collections | August 5 South Haven and October 14 Lawrence
  - Large Tire Collections | July 10 and July 11 Paw Paw
  - <https://vanburencd.org/van-buren-county-recycling-collections/>
- Naturalist Events with the Van Buren District Library Branches | Gobles Hike July 18, Covert Hike August 2, Bangor & Lawrence Paddle August 22 | <https://vanburencd.org/naturalist-2023/>
- VBCD Annual Meeting | July 26 | Flywheelers Museum | <https://vanburencd.org/2023-annual-meeting/>

### Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - In May, Issue 2 of Shoreline Living magazine was released to the public (<https://vanburencd.org/inland-lakes-and-natural-shorelines/>). Water Quality Project Manager Erin Fuller partnered with the Michigan Glacial Lakes Partnership to coordinate the production of this issue featuring five landowners across the Midwest who have used natural landscaping and conservation easements to enhance their lakefront properties and improve the water quality in their lakes. These magazines will be distributed across the Midwest, in print and online. Fuller introduced the magazine during a Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership webinar on May 2, 2023.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area)** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson, Caleigh Dahn*) - The field season has officially begun! The new Strike Team, Jena and Caleigh (pronounced: "Kelly"), have passed their pesticide applicator exams and are working on surveys and treatment. Alex has hit the ground running with site visits, planning for summer events, and wrapping up grant reporting. Abbie kept busy with training the Strike Team and coordinating targeted management and outreach. New project ideas with the Van Buren County Drain Commissioner have been discussed. A population of a state Watch-List species, yellow floating heart, has been confirmed by EGLE and the CISMA.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - In April, the specialist was asked to be part of a task group assembled under the Education Committee of MACD. This task group was assigned with working to bring back the Michigan Envirothon (ME) Program, starting with a Presentation at MACD's Summer Conference. The specialist worked with 2 other



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MAEAP technicians with a history supporting ME and together they assembled a presentation that the Technician gave at MACD Summer Conf. The presentation went very well and sparked a lot of interest and new additions to the task group. The next step is to find a home for ME, funding, and work to recruit teams for 2024's competition. The specialist was also able to get one farm Re-Verified in MAEAP and a new farmer Verified in MAEAP, both in Farmstead and Cropping. The specialist also completed an assessment with a local Middle School that will make for a quick return and an easy Verification in June in the Greenhouse System.

- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman*) - Completed and supplied landowner with first "system" level conservation plan for habitat improvement. Helped to secure ~\$10,000 / acre, to give them the means to improve and manage critical riparian habitat on the Paw Paw river over the next 15 years.
- **Natural Resource Conservation Service Technical Assistance** (*Gabe Francisco*) - This month has all been about Grazing Day Planning. Grazing Day was June 14 at Windshadow Farm in Bangor and was a great success with over 70 people in attendance. The team was also busy getting final IRA-EQIP contracts adjusted, set, and signed for Van Buren County residents. Many folks from the VBCD and NRCS office came out to Thunderfoot Farm on the morning of May 17 to help with sheep shearing. The technician sincerely appreciates everyone's help in wrestling the sheep and Emily's keen hand in operating the On/Off switch on his badly designed shears.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - May was a busy month for Outreach with the preparation of summer events and projects. Work is underway for the Van Buren State Trail Project and Paw Paw River Clean Up. A new interactive map was unveiled on the VBCD website as a part of local food promotion (<https://vanburencd.org/food-farm-fun/>).
- **Resource Recovery Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall*) - May marked the completion and submission of the 2023 Michigan EGLE Recycling and Infrastructure Grant Application. We also hosted a successful collection event in Hartford where we collected the heaviest trailer to date with a passenger tire equivalent of 1,476 tires collected. Van Buren County was also one of seven communities to be able to trail a new tool being developed through The Recycling Partnership called "Recycling Solutions Hub".