



Van Buren Conservation District

September 2022 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Deputy Administrator

The Van Buren Conservation District's (VBCD) highlights report on activities and accomplishments from August follows below. Our reports cover the month prior to when we send the report due to the timing of our board meeting. The last recycling collection (a Recycle Roundup) of the year is coming up on Saturday, October 15 from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the VBISD Conference Center in Lawrence. As always, all Van Buren County residents and landowners are welcome to attend this event. All costs are covered by the Van Buren Conservation District millage, contributions from Van Buren County and local municipalities, and grant funds from Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, & Energy. Please don't hesitate to contact us about your natural resource needs.

Program Updates:

- **Administrator** (*Kim Sinclair*) - We are slowing down a bit as summer fades. We had our last field day at Kolberg Farms, including a fly-on demonstration. We are firming up our calendar for next year. Work on the Tree Sale, Annual Report and Calendar are all happening to ensure timeliness. We are also trying to complete the policy and procedure review by calendar year end. We have also revamped the timesheet to allow for better reporting. Staff is also working on evaluations. This is a paperwork heavy time of year!
- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Hannah Hudson, Carlie Southland*) - The Van Buren Conservation District staff worked this month to recruit farmers to participate in our aerial cover crop seeding co-op. This co-op keeps costs low for farmers who want to plant cover crops into their corn fields pre-harvest. By planting pre-harvest, the cover crop is able to get established before the weather turns cooler. This year, about 5,500 acres of farmland in Van Buren County were cover-cropped using this method.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area)** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Justin Palthe, Lance McCarty*) - August was a prime example of the services the SWxSW Corner CISMA provides. Throughout this month, Alex led naturalist events, performed site visits, and planned upcoming events. Abbie and the Strike Team managed target invasive species at private properties under both grant and for-hire funding. High priority species known within the state and CISMA are being assessed within current or planned management. The Strike Team has been reduced to the Coordinator, Abbie, and the Crew Lead, Justin due to our Crew Member's school year resuming.
- **Education & Water Quality** (*Carlie Southland*) - Conservation Associate, Carlie Southland, finished her Pop Up Lit Labs in partnership with Bangor and Decatur schools. She is continuing to water sample at a local farm. She is also working on farmer contracts for aerial fly-ons.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - In August, Kyle held a Fruit Field Day at Oxley Farms in Lawton, MI. Earlier in the year, Kyle assisted Ed Oxley with planting various cover crops in their vineyard middles. The demo plots totalled about 5 acres and displayed 4 different mixes designed by Colleen Forestieri. The event was well attended and allowed for a lot of casual conversations about the project, VBCD programs, and grape farming in general.



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- **National Association of Conservation Districts Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman*) - A significant number of small livestock farmers have been introduced to the MAEAP program, and will be applying for assistance through the Farm Bill program in 2023. Grazing and waste management are expected to be a major category for funding in Van Buren County for 2023.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - August saw great public outreach with our booth at the Mattawan Farmers Market, Paddle with a Naturalist event on VanAuken Lake, and municipal meeting attendance. Work is already underway for 2023 publications- be sure to look out for the 2023 VBCD Calendar and 2023 Tree Sale!
- **Resource Recovery Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall*) - August was another busy month as we began to finish up the summer festivities. Resource Recovery held the second Recycle Roundup of this year in South Haven. We diverted 1,388 passenger tire equivalents, 17,466 pounds of hazardous waste, and 6,960 pounds of electronics. We have also begun preparing for the 2023 collection season by securing locations for collections and renewing contracts from vendors.