

VBCD
Board of Directors

Jon Mills, Chair
Bryan Cronenwett, Vice Chair
Shirley Bush, Treasurer
Mike Rainey, Secretary
Bill Mihelich, Director

VBCD Staff

Amy Lockhart, Administrator

Erin Fuller,
Black River Watershed
Coordinator

Kyle Mead,
Groundwater Technician

Doug Young,
Conservation Technician



Interesting fact:
A 100 acre grass
planting sequesters
enough carbon dioxide
to offset the emissions
from 18 cars each year!



Inside this issue:

Raingardens	2
Conservation District Funding	3
NRCS News	3
Paw Paw River Watershed	3
Backyard Habitat Series	3
Upcoming Events	4



Van Buren Conservation District

Your Natural Resource Resource

2nd edition

July, 2007

MICHIGAN CONSERVATION CLIMATE INITIATIVE TAKES SHAPE



*Creating revenue and
protecting climate*

The Michigan Conservation and Climate Initiative (MCCI) is a joint project between the Delta Institute, the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, and the State of Michigan. The project allows farmers and landowners to earn greenhouse gas emissions credits when they use conservation tillage, plant grasses or trees, or capture methane with manure digesters.

Open enrollment for MCCI

started this spring and interest has been slowly building across the state. One Van Buren County farm has enrolled in the program and there are currently about 11 contracts statewide, consisting of 634 acres of grass plantings and over 2,097 acres of conservation tillage.

The Conservation District brought Todd Parker of the Delta Institute to our annual meeting in February to introduce the program and answer some questions. His presentation was very informative and well received by those in attendance.

One commonly asked question about the initiative pertains to working forest lands. There is currently a pilot program under way to finalize the details of the

forestry program. When enrollment opens, landowners with established woodlots or trees planted before 1990 will be able to earn carbon credits, just as conservation tillage, tree and grass plantings currently are.

**For more information
about MCCI:**

<http://michiganclimate.org/>

<http://www.chicagoclimatex.com/>

Additionally, you may contact:

**Todd Parker, Associate
Delta Institute**
tparker@delta-institute.org
(517)482-8810

**Amy Lockhart, Administrator
Van Buren Conservation District**
Amy.lockhart@mi.nacdn.net
(269)657-4030 ext. 5

LAWTON H.S. ENVIROTHON TEAM TAKES FIRST PLACE!

Congratulations to the Lawton High School Envirothon Team for winning the state competition which was held on May 3-4 at YWCA Camp Cavell in Lexington, MI.

This is the second year that the Van Buren Conservation District has sponsored the Lawton H.S. team at the state competition and we are very proud! The team is now eligible to advance to the National Canon Envirothon which will be held July 29-August 4 at Hobart & William Smith Colleges in New York.

For more information about the Michigan Envirothon, please

visit our website at:

<http://www.vbco.org/vbcd.asp>



2007 Lawton H.S. Envirothon Team. From left: Andrea Dustin (senior), Tim Lakovic (junior), and Perry Kuipers (senior)

RAINGARDENS



RAINGARDENS are specially designed gardens that help capture and filter polluted runoff or stormwater before it enters our lakes and rivers. When it rains, the water runs off of roofs, lawns, parking lots and streets instead of soaking into the soil. This water, along with pollutants it picks up along the way, ends up in storm sewers and ditches that flow into our streams, rivers and lakes. Salt from roads, pet waste, lawn fertilizers, pesticides, spilled gas, oil and other pollutants are all washed into the local waters.

A raingarden is something that every homeowner can install, and is a great way to do your part to prevent polluted runoff from entering our waterways. Raingardens are shaped like shallow bowls and are planted with wildflowers and grasses to collect and infiltrate rainwater. Any size raingarden will help protect water quality, but generally, it should be about 20-30% of the size of the area that will drain into it. For example,

if you plan to direct runoff from your 1500 square foot roof into a raingarden, the garden should be about 300-450 square feet.

As with all gardening projects, site preparation is extremely important in creating a successful raingarden. The ideal soil mixture for a raingarden is about 60% sand, 20% topsoil, and 20% compost. This mixture will promote proper infiltration of rainwater, ensuring that your raingarden will not become a pond! Dig down and loosen your soil to a depth of about 2 feet. Remove some of the existing soil, and amend it with sand, topsoil, or compost to achieve the proper mix.

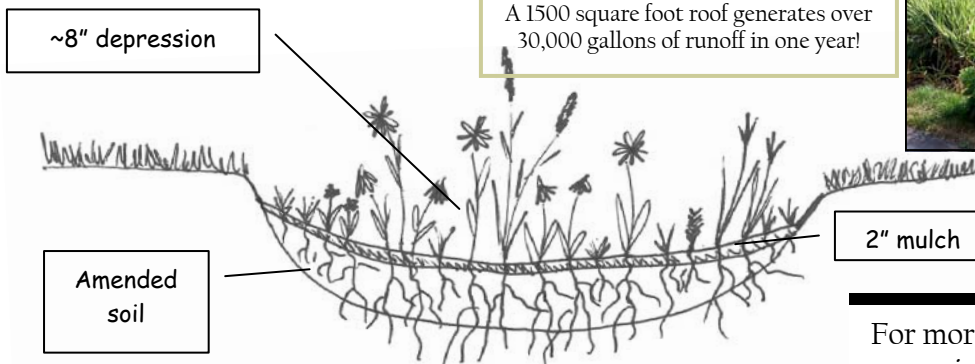


Native plants and wildflowers are ideal plants for your raingarden since they're adapted to our climate conditions. Once you've chosen the right plants for your spot, be sure to mulch them well; this will keep the plants moist and will discourage weeds.

How much rain runs off your roof?
A 1500 square foot roof generates over 30,000 gallons of runoff in one year!

Steps to create your raingarden:

1. Choose the right location: away from foundations, and near a downspout or paved area
2. Evaluate your soil type: do you have sand? Clay? Loam?
3. Develop a design: think about how will you direct water into your raingarden and how big it should be
4. Prepare the site: excavate and replace soil with about 60% sand, 20% topsoil, and 20% compost
5. Select the plants: think about plant height, bloom time, sun conditions, etc.
6. Plant the garden
7. Maintain your raingarden: mulch, weed, and water plants as they're getting established.
8. Enjoy your beautiful landscape!



For more information on raingardens, visit www.raingardens.org

Photographs courtesy of Patricia Pennell, Raingardens of West Michigan
Article by Erin Fuller, Black River Watershed Coordinator

2007 TREE SEEDLING SALE

Thank you to everyone who purchased trees through this year's tree sale! As a result of the sale, over 22,000 tree and shrub seedlings were planted in Van Buren County! Stay tuned for next year's sale flyer and if you have any suggestions for next year's sale list, please let us know!



2007 NATIVE PLANT SALE

This year's first ever Native Plant workshop and sale was a huge success! Comments from the over 25 workshop attendees were overwhelmingly positive about the presentation by Mr. Vern Stephens of Designs By Nature, and the rain held off just long enough to sell most of the extras!

The Van Buren Conservation District would like to thank everyone who participated in this year's workshop and sale. We will be doing it again next year!

CONSERVATION DISTRICT FUNDING IS IN JEOPARDY!

Conservation Districts receive \$19,200 annually from the state of Michigan for Base Operations. This funding has been reduced to \$9,600 for fiscal year 2007 and faces elimination in the State's 2008 budget. Conservation District funding equates to millions of dollars in conservation on the land each year and provides valuable services to local residents. If you value the services and

programs provided by the Van Buren Conservation District and other Conservation Districts statewide, please contact your representative and show your support! Contact information for area representatives can be found on the Conservation District website. www.vbco.org/vbcd.asp



A NOTE FROM YOUR DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has been a very successful program in Michigan and Van Buren County over the past several Years, bringing in over \$1.6 million dollars of federal cost share to Van Buren County farms in fiscal year 2007. The primary resource concerns addressed through EQIP include groundwater protection, soil erosion protection, and proper management

of pastures and manure. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers EQIP along with other Farm Bill programs in the County. District Conservationist Jeff Douglas urges landowners who may be interested in signing up for EQIP to make an appointment to get the process started, as there is quite the list of interested landowners in Van Buren County!

Did You Know??
The Conservation District offers **Irrigation Scheduling and Equipment Rentals** for farms in Southwest Michigan. For more information please give us a call or visit the website!



PAW PAW RIVER WATERSHED PROJECT- UPDATE

The Paw Paw River Watershed Project is being led by the Southwest Michigan Planning

Commission and is being funded by a two year planning grant through the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. One of the main objectives of the project is to develop a watershed management plan. A watershed management plan is a way of identifying critical areas and providing a guide for future management and protection of the watershed. You can view the current draft of the

Paw Paw River Watershed Management Plan and submit your comments online at <http://www.swmpc.org/pprw.asp> and click on the Watershed Management Plan link.

Not feeling very computer savvy? You can contact Matt Meersman at the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission. (269)925-1137 ext. 22



We would like to thank our volunteers for all their hard work at the 2007 Tree Sale and the Native Plant Sale. We could NOT do it without you!

BACKYARD HABITAT SERIES

The Van Buren Conservation District has teamed up with the Allegan Conservation District to put together a Backyard Habitat Series as part of Lake Michigan College's Community Education Program.

The Series will consist of four classroom sessions culminating with a Backyard Habitat Expo which will be open to the community. The cost of attending the entire series will be \$50.00. Classes will be held at the Lake Michigan College South Haven Campus on Tuesdays October 2-30, 2007.

The series will cover the basics of creating a backyard habitat such as providing food,

water and shelter. We will also discuss native plant communities and invasive species along with tips for sustainable gardening like conserving water, reducing pesticide usage, fertilizing without fertilizers and much more!



Photo courtesy of Sue Lockhart

The Backyard Habitat Expo will be a free event, open to all. We will invite experts and vendors from the area who can help you get started with planning and installing your very own backyard habitat!

For more information about the series:

Visit us online!
<http://www.vbco.org/vbcd.asp>
click on "Events and Workshops"

Amy Lockhart
Van Buren Conservation District
(260)657-4030 ext. 5
E-mail: amy.lockhart@mi.nacdnet.net



Van Buren
Conservation District
1035 E. Michigan Ave
Paw Paw, MI 49079

Non Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Permit No. 87

Your Natural Resource Resource

Amy Lockhart
Administrator
Phone: (269)657-4030 x5
E-mail:
amy.lockhart@mi.nacdnet.net

We're on the web!
www.vbco.org/vbcd.asp



UPCOMING EVENTS!

**Healthy Home:
Understanding Your Home's
Environmental Impacts**
Wednesday July 11, 2007
6:30-9:00pm
Van Buren Conference Center
490 S. Paw Paw St.
Lawrence, MI

**Lake and Pond Management and
Water Quality**
Sponsored by the Stewardship
Network: SW Corner Cluster
Friday July 13, 2007
1:00-5:00pm
Sarett Nature Center

**Living With West Michigan
Sand Dunes**
Hosted by the
Allegan Conservation District
August 25, 2007
Presbyterian Camps
Saugatuck, MI
For more info, visit
<http://www.allegancd.org>



2007 Tree Seedling Sale- April, 2007



Wetlands 101 workshop- March 2007

Introduction to Lakes
Friday and Saturday
August 24 and 25, 2007
Van Buren Youth Camp

Backyard Habitat Series
Tuesdays, October 2-30
6-9pm
Lake Michigan College
South Haven Campus

**Michigan Groundwater
Stewardship Program
2007 On-Farm Field Day**
September 2007

Farming For the Future Conference
Monday December 10, 2007
Time:TBA
Van Buren Conference Center
490 S. Paw Paw St.
Lawrence, MI

Check on upcoming Conservation
District events any time by
visiting our website!
<http://www.vbco.org/vbcd.asp>

*All Van Buren Conservation District Programs and
Events are offered on a non-discriminatory basis.*