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Interesting fact:  
Michigan ranks 47th  
in the country for per  
capita spending toward natural  
resources.



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# Van Buren Conservation District

*Your Natural Resource Resource*

3rd edition

November, 2007

## THE ROAD TO ENVIRONMENTAL VERIFICATION

The Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program (MGSP) and the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) would like to congratulate Mark Holtzman and Holtzman Blueberries of South Haven for becoming MAEAP Verified in the Cropping and Farmstead systems.

A MAEAP Verification is recognition from the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) that the farm is sustainable and that the farm operator is using practices that are environmentally friendly. The way to a MAEAP Verification is through MGSP and an assessment tool called a Farm\*A\*Syst. A Farm\*A\*Syst assesses farming practices and rates them according to the potential for pollution. Low risk practices include closing abandoned wells, storing pesticides and fertilizers in approved facilities, and following guidelines set by Michigan State University (MSU) and Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA). A farmstead cannot be MAEAP Verified until every aspect of the farmstead has been assessed and all potential problems have been reduced.

Holtzman Farms has also been Cropping System Verified. Similar to the Farmstead Verification, cropping system verification begins with an assessment tool called a Crop\*A\*Syst. The assessment looks at cropping practices such as the application of pesticides and fertilizers as well as irrigation.



The Holtzman Family proudly displays their hard earned MAEAP sign. L to R: Barb, Bradley, Branden, Mary and Mark Holtzman

Holtzman Blueberries is the first Cropping System Verification in Van Buren County and the first dual verification site in the county. Mark farms 140 acres of blueberries with a few fields of strawberries and cauliflower, all of which were verified under the Cropping System.

“Mark has a Nutrient Management Plan, a Pest Management Plan, and an Irrigation Water Management Plan. His pesticide storage facility was designed to meet federal standards and specifications, as was his state of the art fueling site” says Kyle Mead, Groundwater Technician for Van Buren and Allegan Counties. “These things didn’t happen overnight though, Mark has worked hard to earn that MAEAP sign, and it shows.”

MAEAP is a three phase program, the first phase is Education. Mark attended a

MAEAP Phase I meeting where the areas of MAEAP were explained along with MAEAP funding, partnerships and a background on environmental standards and requirements for the program. The second phase includes conducting a Farm\*A\*Syst or Crop\*A\*Syst. A Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) is required for livestock producers.

The third phase is a third party, MDA verification conducted by a MAEAP Verifier and the producer. In order to maintain his MAEAP Verified status Mark will have to conduct re-verifications and updated Farm\*A\*Syst and Crop\*A\*Syst visits every three years.

For information about the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program and MAEAP, please contact Kyle Mead (269)657-4030 ext. 5 or e-mail: [kyle.mead@mi.nacdnet.net](mailto:kyle.mead@mi.nacdnet.net)

## FARMING FOR THE FUTURE CONFERENCE PLANNED

The Van Buren Conservation District is hosting the First Annual "Farming For The Future" agricultural conference on December 10 at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence. The conference is being held in partnership with the Southwestern Michigan Planning Commission as part of the public education program of the Paw Paw River and Black River Watershed Projects.

The Keynote speaker for the conference will be Julie Cowie, Project Manager for Lakeshore Harvest Country, a new Agri-tourism trail in development in Southwest Michigan. In her progress report, you'll hear how the trail is being organized, the goals for Lakeshore Harvest Country, and how you might become part of the trail in the future. She will describe how Casco and Ganges Township farmers landed a \$50,000 grant designed to keep land in Ag and benefit growers by drawing customers straight to the farm.

The cost for attending the conference is just \$10.00 which includes lunch and conference materials.

For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.vanburencd.org>

Van Buren Conservation District would like to thank our sponsors for making "Farming For The Future" possible!



Farming For The Future  
 December 10, 2007  
 8:30 AM-4:30 PM  
 Van Buren Conference Center  
 Lawrence, MI

Registration  
 Deadline  
 December 5

### Agenda

- 8:30 Registration & Continental Breakfast
- 9:00 Welcome & Introductions Amy Lockhart, Van Buren CD  
 Watersheds of Southwest Michigan Erin Fuller, Van Buren CD
- 9:15-10 Keynote Address: Agritourism in Southwest Michigan  
Julie Cowie, Project Coordinator for Lakeshore Harvest Country
- 10:10-11:10 **Breakout Sessions (choose one)**
  - (A) Organic Farming "How To" - Tips & Techniques form an Organic Farmer  
Greg Vlaming, Berrien County MSUE
  - (B) Marketing -How to successfully market your farm  
Gerah Dutkiewicz, The Allegan Group
- 11:20-12:20 **Breakout Sessions (choose one)**
  - (A) Progressive Planning & Resource Management Systems  
Jean Gagliardo, Allegan CD & Jeff Douglas, NRCS
  - (B)\* Personal Protective Equipment, Pesticide Safety & Intro to the new Federal Applicator's Manual  
Mark Longstroth, Van Buren MSUE
  - (C) Leveraging Conservation Credits with MCCI (Michigan Carbon Sequestration Program)  
Todd Parker, Delta Institute
- 12:20-1:00 **Lunch (provided)**
- 1:00-2:00 **Breakout Sessions (choose one)**
  - (A)\* Pest & Nutrient Management and Record Keeping  
Doug Young, VBCD & Kyle Mead, VBCD
  - (B) Conservation Easements & The Van Buren County Farmland Preservation Program  
Emily Wilke, Southwest MI Land Conservancy & Charles Lachman, Program Participant
  - (C) Complying with BODA (Bodies of Dead Animals Act) "What You Need to Know"  
Josh Appleby, Michigan Dept. of Agriculture
- 2:10-3:10 **Breakout Sessions (choose one)**
  - (A) Irrigation Scheduling-What Irrigation Scheduling is & How it can save money on your Farm!  
Ron Goldy, Berrien MSUE & Kyle Mead, VBCD
  - (B) Community Supported Agriculture: Connecting Local Farmers with Local Consumers  
Lee Arboreal, Eater's Guild
  - (C)\* Agrichemical Containment Facilities-Requirements and Specifications  
Jeff Douglas, NRCS
- 3:20-4:20 **Breakout Sessions (choose one)**
  - (A) Advantages of No-Till Farming and Cover Crops  
Brook Wilke, Kellogg Biological Station
  - (B) Cost Share and Federal Farm Bill Programs Info  
Steve Bare, NRCS
  - (C)\* Pest Management Outlook—Emerging Pest Issues  
Bruce MacKellar, St. Joe MSUE
- 4:40-4:30 Closing Remarks & RUP Credits
- 4:30 Adjourn



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## GROWING GREENER IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

### What is Growing Greener in Southwest Michigan?

It is a multi-jurisdictional (regional) initiative, encompassing Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties, which seeks to create a vision of green infrastructure based on science and public input. This vision can be used as a tool for more sustainable economic and community development in southwest Michigan.

### What Is A Green Infrastructure?

Green Infrastructure is a connected network of natural areas and other open spaces planned and managed to conserve natural ecosystems and the services they provide. These lands provide multiple benefits to people and wildlife such as maintaining clean air and water and providing areas for recreation. Often these natural areas are connected to communities by trails or greenways. Green infrastructure elements can be in urban, suburban and rural areas and may or may not be open to the public.

### Why is Green Infrastructure Planning Important?

Sustained prosperity in southwest Michigan is deeply rooted in and dependent on our natural resources. We must begin to plan for and invest in green infrastructure as we do for gray infrastructure (roads, sewer and water lines, municipal buildings, etc.). The Growing Greener initiative will identify the region's priority conservation lands and foster increased awareness of the connection between green infrastructure and prosperity (recreation, tourism, economic, and health benefits) for current and future generations.

Want more information about Growing Greener in Southwest Michigan or Green Infrastructure? Visit the Southwestern Michigan Planning Commission's Growing Greener Website at <http://www.swmpc.org/growgreen.asp>

Green Infrastructure (GI) incorporates public, private, and working lands that include assets such as rivers, large natural areas (hubs), wetlands, forests, parks, beaches and agricultural lands.



## STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING FERTILIZER INPUTS

By Doug Young  
Conservation Technician, Van Buren CD

Reducing the need for fertilizers is both good for the checkbook and good for the environment. By reducing the amount of fertilizers applied, a producer can not only save money, but reduce the possibility that excess nutrients can leach into groundwater, or make their way into surface waters, causing environmental damage. Attempting to reduce applied fertilizers does not mean giving the plants less nutrients. Instead, it means managing the soil, nutrients, and plants in such a way that the plant's nutrient needs can still be fully met, but less fertilizer will need to be applied annually. Accomplishing this goal requires the producer to apply a variety of management practices.

The first and most basic step in reducing fertilizer application rates is to soil sample. This is important so that the level of nutrients in the soil can be understood. The soil sample is then compared to the second important piece of information, the crop's nutrient needs. Comparing these two pieces of information determine if the soil is deficient or already meets the

crop's needs. If the soil is deficient, then the amount of nutrients to be added can then be calculated. This helps to avoid over application of nutrients. Another management practice is to use cover crops. Cover crops reduce leaching and retain nutrients in the root zone, making them reusable for the next year's crop. This process recycles nutrients in the field, reducing the amount of inputs each year. When more nitrogen is needed, use legumes as a cover crop.

Other practices include reducing wind and water erosion, since eroding soil usually takes attached nutrients with it. In addition, reducing soil disturbance (plowing, chiseling, etc.) will help conserve or increase levels of soil organic matter.

In addition to its many benefits to plants, soil organic

matter (SOM) is an important reservoir of nutrients that plants can take advantage of.

Although cropping systems in Michigan are extremely varied due to the variety of crops grown in Michigan, all of these management practices can be applied to virtually any cropping system. Contact the Van Buren Conservation District if you would like more specific information on any of these practices, and how they may be applied to your farm.





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We're on the web!  
[www.vanburencd.org](http://www.vanburencd.org)

### Check Out Our New Website!

Van Buren Conservation District has a new home on the web!

You can find us at <http://www.vanburencd.org>



Visit our website for information about current Conservation District Programs & Events, Tree and Plant Sale information, Conservation Resources and much more! Please let us know if you have any comments of suggestions for our new website, your feedback goes a long way to helping us do a better job serving the people of Van Buren County!

**Van Buren County Plat Books are on Sale!**  
2005 Van Buren County Plat Books  
are now just \$25.00

You can pick up your copy at the  
Conservation District office or give us a call!