

**Van Buren
Conservation District
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Van Buren Conservation District website has had a make-over!

Check out the newly designed website, including online tree and plant sales, program information, workshop registrations and more!

<http://www.vanburencd.org>



The Van Buren Conservation District would like to thank all of our supporters and volunteers from 2007. Your support and enthusiasm has and will continue to be an inspiration to us as we work together to put conservation on the ground.

**2007
ANNUAL
REPORT**

**VAN BUREN
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

2007 Board of Directors	Staff
Jon Mills, Chair	Amy Lockhart, Administrator
Bryan Cronenwett, Vice Chair	Erin Fuller, Watershed Coordinator
Shirley Jones, Treasurer	Kyle Mead, Groundwater Technician
Mike Rainey, Secretary	Doug Young, Conservation Technician
Bill Mihelich, Director	

Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan

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Julie Cowie addresses the crowd at Farming for the Future about Lakeshore Harvest Country, the local agri-tourism trail under development in northwest Van Buren and southwest Allegan Counties.



Raingarden and streambank restoration areas of the Lyons Park Project in Bangor.



Van Buren Conservation District was a proud sponsor of the 2007 Lawton High School Envirothon team, who took First Place at the State competition, with only 3 team members!

L to R: Andrea Dustin, Tim Lakovic, and Perry Kuipers

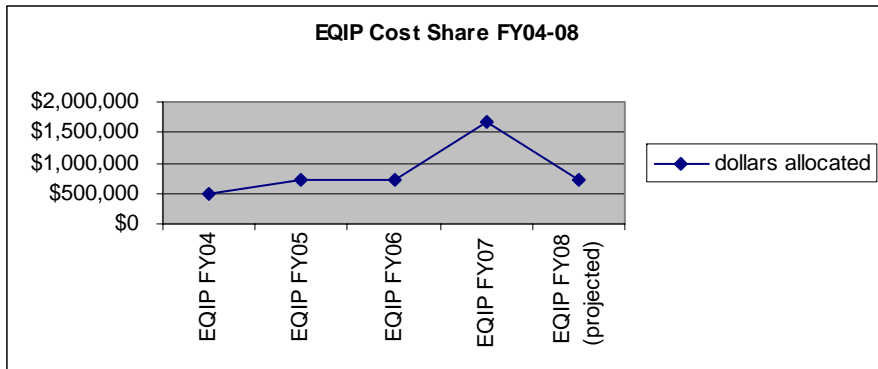


Conservation Partnership: NRCS

Each year, the Conservation District supports the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) with the administration of Federal Farm Bill Programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The following figures represent federal cost share dollars brought into Van Buren County as a result of this partnership.

FY2007 EQIP

Total contracts 25
 Total allocation \$1.68 million
 12.3% of the total Michigan EQIP allocation



	dollars allocated	no. contracts
EQIP FY04	\$484,394	15
EQIP FY05	\$722,577	19
EQIP FY06	\$735,568	24
EQIP FY07	\$1,685,953.40	25
EQIP FY08 (projected)	\$724,869	21

A note from the Administrator

2007 was a very busy year for the Conservation District!

The Conservation District led Education & Outreach campaign for the Black River and Paw Paw River Watershed Projects boasts some very successful workshops starting in February of 2007 with Landscaping for Water Quality, followed by a summit for municipal officials titled Filling the Gaps, Wetlands 101, a Low Impact Development seminar and wrapping up in December with Farming for the Future. We took a chance on hosting a large, day long farming seminar in December titled "Farming for the Future". What a success that turned out to be! With over 70 attendees, the conference covered a variety of farm topics including Organic Farming, Community Supported Agriculture, Local Marketing and Agri-Tourism, Pest and Nutrient Management and much more, look for a repeat in 2008!

We also hosted the first **Backyard Habitat Series** in partnership with the Allegan Conservation District. Hopefully this can develop into a more stable program for the County to provide wildlife management planning assistance to County residents.

Perhaps one of the most important accomplishments of the Conservation District in 2007 was in fact an accomplishment of all Michigan Conservation Districts. Early in 2007, the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts sponsored a strategic planning workshop for Districts to come together and discuss the future of Districts in Michigan. Out of those 2 days came a comprehensive strategic plan, referred to as the "First Steps" process. Sub-committees were formed to work on Identity (marketing), Unity, Partnerships, Public Funding and Private funding. With an overarching goal to reduce Districts' dependence on grant funding and increase the capacity of ALL Conservation Districts. I found myself met with the challenge of heading up the Identity committee.

The statewide Conservation District Marketing plan began to take shape this summer and continues to grow as Conservation Districts work with The Allegan Group to develop a common identity and new strategies to market Conservation Districts to the general public as well as State and local legislators. Look for more great things to come in 2008!

Yours in Conservation,

Amy Lockhart
 Administrator
 Van Buren Conservation District



Conservation District Operations

The information provided below reflects conservation technical assistance provided during FY2006 which was not performed by other grants (ex. Groundwater, Watershed Project, etc.)

In-office & phone assists	517
Tree and Shrub Sales	
customers	200
trees sold	\$21,157.00
Educational Programs	
Youth education	700
adult education	1180
newspaper articles	2
newsletter	2
Reviewing applications/permits	10
Conservation sales	
customers	167
dollars	\$15668.05
Equipment Rental	
customers	13
acres no till	90
acres seeded	177
Volunteer hours	
total hours donated	96

Right: Kids learn about stream habitat and macro-invertebrates during Fish Fest at the Wolf Lake Fish Hatchery.



Conservation Technical Assistance Initiative

In October of 2006, Doug Young started with the Van Buren Conservation District in the newly created technician position for the Conservation Technical Assistance Initiative program. This program is the result of the cooperative efforts of the Van Buren Conservation District, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the State of Michigan-Department of Agriculture. The goal of this program is to hire staff that can assist with the many requests for conservation assistance that the Natural Resources Conservation Service receives.

During 2007, Doug worked with 33 landowners to design or install 56 conservation practices under Federal Farm Bill programs. Some highlights include 13 Agri-Chemical Containment Facilities, 11 Pest Management Plans, 8 Nutrient Management Plans, and 11 Heavy Use Protection Areas. The work also included a variety of other practices including: fencing, water pipelines, watering stations, windbreaks, manure storage, cover crops, prescribed grazing, brush management, and water diversions.

With a very successful 2007 EQIP signup, 2008 looks to be another year with a very high workload!



This photo shows an Agrichemical Containment Facility (ACF) that was completed in 2007 with cost share from NRCS, and design and construction site inspection services provided by the Van Buren Conservation District. Structures such as this are dedicated solely to storing and mixing agricultural chemicals (pesticides and

fertilizers). It has a sealed concrete floor that is sloped in the middle to collect any potential leaks or spills. This practice significantly reduces risks of pollution to groundwater and surface waters.

Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program

2007 Overview

Farm*A*Syst conducted	18
Crop*A*Syst conducted	9
On farm risk reductions	158
Irrigation Management Plans written	1
Nutrient Management Plans written	3
Pest Management Plans written	1
Irrigation Scheduling Program	
Customers	9
\$ contributed to local cost share budget	\$3,600.00
On Farm Field Day Attendance	20
Emergency Plans Written / Updated	
GSP Cost Share	
Spill Kits	\$22.92
Seasonal Pesticide Storage	\$686.15
Well-Decommissioning	\$1,105.26
MAEAP Incentive Payments	\$1,750.00
Total Cost Share Paid	\$3564.33



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 Van Buren County farm to earn verification in two MAEAP system areas, Farmstead and Cropping. Congratulations Holtzman Family!

FY 2007 Appropriations Budget

	2006-2007 Approved
REVENUES	
Federal Grants	\$131,272.00
State Grants	\$127,200.00
Contribution from Local Units	
Charges for Sales & Services	\$12,197.00
Interest & Rentals	\$27,913.43
Other Revenues	\$15,747.57
Non business License & Permits	
Sale of Fixed Asset	
Tree Sales	\$15,000.00
Items for Purchase	
Total Revenue & Other Sources	\$329,300.00
EXPENDITURES	
281 Operations	\$91,943.00
282 Groundwater	\$44,065.00
285 AmeriCorps	
290 Black River Watershed	\$128,272.00
291 Paw Paw River Watershed	\$3,000.00
294 Reforestation	\$7,050.00
Total Expenditures & Other Uses	\$329,330.00
Net Revenues (Expenditures)	0.00



Black River Watershed Project

The Black River Watershed Project is in the second year of a three-year grant project to implement the Black River Watershed Management Plan. The Van Buren Conservation District oversaw the creation of the plan, which was completed in 2005. The three main focus areas of this project are 1) reducing polluted runoff to the Black River, 2) outreach and education, and 3) land use planning and land protection.

Highlights of the past year have included:

- Completing a streambank stabilization and raingarden installation project in Bangor.
- Writing and distributing watershed newsletters and brochures.
- Meeting with local officials and organizations to increase community awareness of the project.
- Coordinating educational workshops for local decision makers and residents, including Low Impact Development and Filling the Gaps: Local Government’s Important Role in Environmental Protection.
- Working with the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy and a Land Protection Team to highlight properties for preservation in the watershed.
- Distributing storm drain decals with the message “Don’t Dump-Drains to Waterways” to the towns of Bangor, Bloomingdale and South Haven.
- Working with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission to review plans and zoning ordinances to help communities better plan for long term water quality protection.
- 1287 volunteer hours were donated in 2007. When combined with other donations of cash and materials, a total of \$52,593 of local match was donated to this project in 2007.



Native plants along the boardwalk installed in Bangor’s Lyons Park.

Combined Information and Education Efforts: Black River and Paw Paw River Projects

Sharing multiple municipalities, the Black River and Paw Paw River Watershed Projects saw a unique opportunity to combine educational efforts, allowing them to effectively promote the ideals and concepts being presented by each individual project.

The Van Buren Conservation District is involved in this joint committee and has also agreed to host an on-going watershed workshop series as part its local match to both projects. 2007 was a very successful year for the watershed workshops. **Landscaping for Water Quality** was held in February, followed by **Wetlands 101** in March and **Farming for the Future** in December. Each of the workshops focused on water quality related issues and aimed to help people understand how their actions directly affect water quality and the environment. Attendance was very high and feedback was very positive!

The Conservation District has also made strides toward developing the Information & Education Product Plan for the Paw Paw & Black River Watershed Projects. This plan will be included in the Watershed Management plans for both watersheds.



Patricia Pennell, project coordinator for Rain Gardens of West Michigan presents to a Full House at the Landscaping for Water Quality workshop.



Low Impact Development seminar participants group up to discuss advantages and challenges of Low Impact Development