



Highlight

In May, Issue 2 of Shoreline Living magazine was released to the public. 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.

Pine/Mill/Mud 319 Project (EGLE 319 Grant)

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Water sampling from tile drains and streams 5/2/23, 5/10/23, 5/25/23
2. Continue grower recruitment and contracts
3. Calculated pollutant load reductions from best management practices
4. Farmer interviews/surveys
5. Prep for summer field days
6. Meeting with MSUE staff 5/9/23
7. Alfalfa Harvest 5/17/23

Upcoming Activities

1. Water sampling from tile drains and streams 6/7/23, 6/21/23
2. Prep for summer field days
3. Tillage survey 6/1/23, 6/7/23
4. Farm Field Day 6/14/23
5. Alfalfa Harvest 6/16/23

Great Lakes Protection Fund Project (Xylem, Inc. + Notre Dame)

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Team video conferences 5/18/23, 5/30/23
2. Presenting at Indiana-Michigan Symposium (theme: "Michiana Drainage") hosted by the St. Joseph River Basin Commission 5/12/23
3. Submitted quarterly reporting 5/17/23



Van Buren Conservation District

May 2023 Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects Board Report

Prepared 6/15/23

Staff: Colleen Forestieri Erin Fuller Carlie Southland

Upcoming Activities

1. Team video conferences 6/1/23, 6/27/23
2. Outreach planning
3. Grazing Workshop Field Day 6/14/23
4. Project extended through 9/1/2023

USDA - AFRI (Notre Dame)

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Continue developing outreach materials
2. Grazing Field Day Planning Meeting 5/2/23
3. Interview/filming with UND Learning 5/10/23

Upcoming Activities

1. Continue outreach activities
2. Submit quarterly reporting 6/12/23
3. Farm Field Day 6/14/23

Other

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Weekly staff meetings
2. Reviewed grant budgets and staff hours allocated to each project
3. Summer programming planning and prep
4. Admin + water quality team meeting 5/2/23
5. Shoreline Living webinar 5/2/23
6. Friends of the St. Joe Watershed Celebration 5/122/23
7. MNSP Outreach/Education Committee Meeting 5/18/23
8. Red Arrow property management discussions 5/30/23
9. Social media tasks

Upcoming Activities

1. Weekly staff meetings
2. Admin + water quality team meeting 6/6/23
3. Red Arrow property management discussions 6/8/23
4. Graz
5. Gobles Elementary Summer School program 6/15/23



6. Summer Education at Wolf Lake Fish Hatchery 6/29/23 7. Social media tasks
New Grant Proposals Submitted 1. NA

Photos

Water Quality Project Manager Erin Fuller staff coordinated the production of Issue 2 of Shoreline Living magazine, which highlights landowners who have used natural landscaping and conservation easements to enhance their lakefront properties and improve water quality. The magazine had a public release in May 2023.





SW x SW Corner Cisma

May 2023 Board Report

Prepared 06/01/2023

Staff: Alex Florian Abigale Bristol

Caleigh Dahn Jena Johnson

Highlights

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.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Alex Began work on MISGP reporting
2. Alex Presented to "Free our trees" on the basics of invasive species management
3. Alex Performed 5 site visits.
4. Abbie began stiltgrass and kudzu outreach
5. Abbie and Jena surveyed Camp Tamarack for invasive plants
6. Abbie, Alex, and Jena assisted with the VBCD and TRC Stream Sampling event.
7. Strike Team members passed their Pesticide Applicator Exams and started work
8. Strike Team began spotted lanternfly surveys throughout the Cisma service area
9. Strike team trained on survey and mapping techniques
10. The Cisma held a Steering committee meeting
11. The Cisma and VBCD management team met with VBC Drain Commissioner Joe Parman
12. The Cisma partnered with EGLE to Survey the known Parrot Feather site in Berrien Springs
13. The Cisma partnered with EGLE to confirm a new detection of Yellow Floating Heart in Berrien County
14. Alex Planned Landing Blitzes for July
15. Alex, Caleigh, and Jena Scouted sites for Michigan Paddle Stewards Train the Trainer event to be held later this Summer.

Meetings/Trainings Attended





SW x SW Corner CISMA

May 2023 Board Report

Prepared 06/01/2023

Staff: Alex Florian Abigale Bristol

Caleigh Dahn Jena Johnson

1. Cass Conservation Community Zoom
2. Camp Tamarack Conservation Committee
3. GLRI Project Manager site visits

Upcoming Activities

1. VBCD Grazing Field Day
2. Spotted Lanternfly mock exercise followup
3. Harbor Country Hikers Hike with a Naturalist
4. MISGP reporting due

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. N/A

Species of the Month: Stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*)

Overview:

1. Stiltgrass is a prolific, warm-season annual grass. One plant can produce 100 to 1000 viable seeds.
2. Creates a dense bed of thatch that shades out native plants, especially in forests.
3. Only one known site exists in Southwest Michigan. However, this may be due to being overlooked, as it is quite inconspicuous.

Identification:

1. Leaves are about half an inch wide and 1"-5" long.
2. Reaches 2'-4' by August
3. A silver stripe runs from the base of the leaf toward the tip
4. Look for plants in July and August. Note: be sure to brush off your shoes if you find this plant, as the seeds are small and easily travel in the treads of shoes!





Van Buren Conservation District
May 2023 Deputy Administrator Board Report
Prepared June 2023
Staff: **Emilly Hickmott**

Highlights

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/>

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Provided information for and assistance to local municipalities, agencies, organizations, and residents regarding District programs
2. Reviewed legislative and other partner agency updates and passed along grant opportunities
3. Updated VBCD shared calendars
4. Wrote and distributed May 2023 Municipal Programs Report
5. Prepared VBCD administrative team & staff meeting agendas and conducted meetings
6. Compiled and distributed VBCD board meeting materials
7. Promoted district programs and events through various media including press releases
8. Updated VBCD website
9. Drafted/updated VBCD policies for Board review
10. Arranged preparations for Grazing Workshop Field Day

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. CISMA Strike Team Orientation (05/01)
2. Summer Programming Planning Meeting (05/01)
3. Grazing Workshop Planning (05/02, 05/19)
4. Tree Seedling Sale Review (05/02)
5. 80th Anniversary Project Planning (05/02)
6. Paw Paw Rotary Club Presentation (05/04)
7. Webhelp Training (05/05)
8. Mini-grant Award Presentation (05/10)
9. Great Lakes Leadership Academy Growth Partner Meeting (05/12)
10. CISMA Steering Committee Meeting (05/15)
11. VBC Drain Commission Meeting (05/16)
12. Sheep Shearing Learning Day (05/17)
13. Michigan Association of Conservation Districts Capitol Day (05/18)



Van Buren Conservation District
May 2023 Deputy Administrator Board Report
Prepared June 2023
Staff: **Emilly Hickmott**

14. Materials Management Planning Meeting (05/18)
15. VBCD Staff Meeting (05/02, 05/09, 05/16)
16. VBCD Management Team Meeting (05/12)
17. VBCD Resource Recovery Admin Team Meeting (05/15)
18. VBCD Outreach Admin Team Meeting (05/17)
19. Ag/Water Quality Team Meeting (05/02)
20. Ag Check-in Meeting (05/15)
21. Conservation Associate Weekly Check-in (05/04, 05/11, 05/18)
22. Resource Recovery Check-ins (05/01, 05/04, 05/15)
23. SWxSW Corner Cisma Strategy Meeting (05/04, 05/15)
24. NRCS Conservation Tech Check-in Meetings (05/10)
25. VBC Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting (05/09)
26. VBC Committee of the Whole (05/09)
27. VBC Board of Commissioners Meeting (05/09)
28. Municipal Meetings (Village of Lawton - 05/09, City of Gobles - 05/16)

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. NA



Van Buren Conservation District

May 2023 MAEAP Board Report

Prepared June 2023

Staff: Kyle Mead



Highlights:

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 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.

Percentage Completed: 66.6% of required assessments completed

24% of verifications

Activities, Accomplishments, & Challenges

1. 5/1 – Farm Visit – Gobles
2. 5/4 – Farm Visit – Paw Paw
3. 5/17 – Assisted Ag & Water Quality Teammates with yield measuring grant objectives
4. 5/24 – Verification – Grand Junction
5. 5/24 – Verification – Paw Paw
6. 5/29 – Michigan Envirothon Presentation at MACD Summer Conference

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 5/1 – Ag Container Planning Meeting
2. 5/2 – Grazing Field Day Planning Meeting
3. 5/9 – Meeting for Field Day with MSUE and VBCD at farm
4. 5/11 – MAEAP Tech Quarterly Zoom meeting
5. 5/29 – 5/30 – MACD Summer Conference

A*Syst Type	Monthly A*Systs	Fiscal Year to Date A*Systs
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Van Buren Conservation District

May 2023 MAEAP Board Report

Prepared June 2023

Staff: Kyle Mead



Farm*A*Systs:	2	28
Orchard*A*Systs:	2	15
Greenhouse*A*Systs:	0	2
Nursery*A*Systs:	0	0
Crop*A*Systs:	0	5
Livestock*A*Systs:	0	4
FWHP*A*Systs:	0	0
Total Assessments Completed (always year to date):	4	52/ 78 Goal
On Farm Risk Reductions (always year to date):	0	0 / 150 Goal
MAEAP Verifications (always year to date):	4	18 completed YTD (9FAS, 9CAS, #LAS, FWH) 58 Goal

Photos



Van Buren Conservation District:
May 2023 NACD Technical Assistance
Board Report
Prepared June 2023
Staff: Lucas Hartman



Highlights

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.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
 - a. Preparing a variety of applications for the “Quality Assurance Review” phase. This is the final review process before applications will be recommended to the state conservationist for “obligation”, and work on a variety of conservation practices may begin.
 - i. Goal: 50% of approved applications obligated by May 31
2. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
 - a. A new staggered approach to Farm Bill program administration has been applied this fiscal year.
 - i. CSP applications will be processed in Q3 of FY2023
3. Conservation Operations Technical Assistance (CoTA)

Scheduled meetings with several landowners to better understand their goals for habitat conservation, and facilitate applications to a variety of Farm Bill conservation programs in the fall for 2023 (fiscal year 2024).
4. Upcoming Events
 - a. NACD Summer Meeting: July 15th - 19th
 - i. Will be attending many of the relevant sessions virtually.
 1. VBCD has interests in obtaining information related to future grant proposals and novel ways of leveraging funding to maximize our conservation goals.



Van Buren Conservation District:
May 2023 NACD Technical Assistance
Board Report
Prepared June 2023
Staff: Lucas Hartman



New Grant Proposals Submitted

No new proposals at this time. Requests for continued funding through NACD are expected to be released in June of 2023.

Proposals have historically been for 12 months of continued funding for a "Conservation Technician" to assist NRCS with Farm Bill programs and conservation planning.

The National Wild Turkey Federation has opened RFP for critical turkey habitat research and improvement, providing an opportunity for projects at VBCD owned natural areas.



Highlights

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Grazing Day Planning - This month has all been about Grazing Day Planning. Grazing Day is June 14th at Windshadow Farm from 9:00am to 12:30pm. The technician is very excited to bring this brand new Field Day offering to the VBCD!
2. IRA-EQIP Final submissions and contract signing - As well as getting ready for our Grazing Day, everyone on the NRCS side (Kami, Lucas, Jeff, and Gabe) have been also busy getting final contracts for IRA-EQIP adjusted, set, and signed for Van Buren County residents.
3. Sheep Shearing Morning - Many folks from the VBCD and NRCS office came out to Thunderfoot Farm on the morning of May 17th 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 my badly designed shears.
4. Submitted an internal proposal to purchase smaller "Pasture" Broadcast Seeder - A smaller broadcast seeder can be used for 30hp or even ATV or Lawn tractors as an option for area farmers besides only the current seeders we have in our equipment library that can only be used by tractors 65 hp and above. These larger seeders that we can offer are more meant to apply cover crops, rather than small already pre-designed pastures that are generally 2 acres or smaller per paddock and feature permanent fencing and support structures.

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 5-2-23 - Grazing Day Planning with the VBCD - VBCD Office
2. 5-8-23 - Farm Visit - Paw Paw - CMNP / Agricultural Waste Runoff
3. 5-8-23 - Grazing Day Site Visit - Bangor - Windshadow Farm
4. 5-9-23 - Mile a Minute Weed Investigation with CISMA Team - Lawrence
5. 5-10-23 - NRCS CT check-in Meeting - VBCD Office
6. 5-17-23 - Sheep Shearing Day at Thunderfoot Farm - Paw Paw
7. 5-19-23 - Grazing Day check-in - VBCD Office
8. 5-30-23 - EQIP Farm Visit - Scotts
9. 5-30-23 - Grazing Day Meeting with Lauren Burns of Tending Tilith - Scotts

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. NA



Van Buren Conservation District
May 2023 NRCS CT Board Report
Prepared: June 2023
Staff: Gabriel Francisco



Upcoming Activities

1. Van Buren County 4-H Fair - Coming up quickly is the 2023 Van Buren Youth Fair. The VBCS will be in attendance, and I personally will be part of both the Agricultural Olympics and Sheep judging panels.
2. Thunderfoot Farm NRCS Work - My personal farm, Thunderfoot Farm, is officially off and running getting work done for our own NRCS EQIP contract! First up is brush management, taking out the abundance of leftover christmas trees and reverting the field back into a working pasture! Follow us, or drive on by and check out my progress as I start to retake the farm!

Photos



Current "Pastures" at Thunderfoot Farm



Van Buren Conservation District
May 2023 NRCS CT Board Report
Prepared: June 2023
Staff: Gabriel Francisco



Emily and Gabe Shearing Atlas the Blue Faced Border Leicester



Van Buren Conservation District

May 2023 Outreach Board Report

Prepared 5/31/2023

Staff: **Jacob Diljak**

Highlights

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.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Social media management: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, data tracking
2. Financials: invoice and receipt management
3. General VBCD photography: events, presentations, stock photography
4. Conservation Corner: review, editing
5. VBCD Newsletter: drafting, sending
6. Grazing Workshop: postcards, social media, fliers, press release
7. Annual Meeting: promotion and postcards
8. Tree Sale: 2024 planning
9. 80th Anniversary: logo create and planning
10. Food, Farm, & Fun Guide: website page changes, interactive map unveiling, local food promotion, public green space map work
11. Technology: printer fixes and phone activation
12. Columbia Township Park: letter of support
13. Billboards: design work, planning, coordination
14. Plat books: distribution and purchasing
15. Van Buren State Trail Project: project planning
16. Paw Paw River Clean Up: project planning, contract work
17. Hike/Paddle with a Naturalist: promotion, partner coordination
18. CISMA: Phragmites door hanger
19. Outreach: pollinator packet reordering

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. Staff meetings (5/2, 5/9, 5/16, 5/23, 5/30)
2. Admin team meetings (5/3)
3. Outreach Check-In (5/17)
4. Tree Seedling Sale Recap & Survey Review (5/2)
5. 80th Anniversary Project Meeting (5/2)
6. Grazing Workshop Planning (5/2)



Van Buren Conservation District

May 2023 Outreach Board Report

Prepared 5/31/2023

Staff: **Jacob Diljak**

7. Pine Grove Township Board Meeting (5/3)
8. Macroinvertebrate Stream Monitoring (5/7) **pictured**
9. Hamilton Township Board Meeting (5/9)
10. Mini-Grant Awarding (5/10)
11. St. Joseph River Basin Commission Annual Indiana-Michigan Symposium (5/12)
12. Two Rivers Coalition Board Meeting (5/16)
13. Shearing Day (5/17) **pictured**
14. Hartford Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronics Collection (5/17) **pictured**
15. Paw Paw River Paddle and Photography (5/29)
16. Conservation Campus Meeting (5/30)
17. Board Basics Training (5/31)

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. NA

Upcoming Activities

1. Waverly Township Board Meeting (6/1)
2. Decatur Township Board Meeting (6/8)
3. Geneva Township Board Meeting (6/13)
4. Paw Paw Farmers Market Meeting (6/21)
5. Paw Paw Recycle Roundup (6/24)
6. Covert PSTE Collection (6/29)

	Trends	Content	Audience
Facebook	12,770 People Reached	32 Posts	2,499 Page Likes (45 ↑)
Instagram	169 People Reached	31 Posts	207 Followers (14 ↑)
LinkedIn	3 Impressions	3 Posts	40 Followers (2 ↑)
YouTube	Total Views	-	1,000 Subscribers (15 ↑)
TikTok	110 Likes	3 Posts	5 Followers (5 ↑)



Van Buren Conservation District

May 2023 Outreach Board Report

Prepared 5/31/2023

Staff: **Jacob Diljak**

Event Category	Number of Events	Impressions
Miscellaneous	3	57
VBCD Events	3	97
Farmers Markets	0	0



Deputy Administrator Emily Hickmott and Conservation Technician Gabriel Francisco shearing a sheep during the Shearing Day event (5/17).



Van Buren Conservation District
May 2023 Outreach Board Report
Prepared 5/31/2023
Staff: **Jacob Diljak**



CISMA Coordinator Alex Florian at the Macroinvertebrate Stream Sampling event (5/7).



Outreach Coordinator Jacob Diljak and Recycling & Materials Management Coordinator Kalli Marshall at the Hartford Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronics Collections event at Hartford Township Hall (5/17).



Van Buren Conservation District
May 2023 Resource Recovery Board Report
Prepared June 2023
Staff: Kalli Marshall Jacob Diljak



Highlights

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".

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Responded to residents who had recycling questions with options for disposal/recycling
2. Submitted appropriate check requests for Gobles Village Market paper/cardboard recycling
3. Scheduled social media posts for May 2023
4. Read resource recovery updates from Michigan Recycling Coalition and EGLE to keep abreast of trends and changes
5. Tracked electronics collection for May 2023
6. Remained up to date with 2023 Scrap Tire Grant requests from partners
7. Sent Municipality pledge forms to applicable communities
8. Worked with Townships with transfer stations on proposals for recycling infrastructure grant
9. Contacted Municipalities for information on current transfer station use and infrastructure
10. Requested and received quotes for purchases regarding the EGLE Infrastructure Grant
11. Kept up with supplies at Battery Recycling Stations
12. Completed Recycling Conservation Corners for publication
13. Wrote thank you letters to municipalities who participate in the Municipal Pledge Program for Resource Recovery
14. Scheduled staff meetings for Recycle Roundup Collections
15. Finished and submitted Infrastructure Grant with eight municipalities
16. Processed Invoices from Scrap Tire Grant
17. Completed Recycle, Mi interview
18. Registered for MACD Summer Conference
19. Organized Pesticide Container recycling pickup with MAEAP
20. Discussed potential partnership of Hartford Schools and Township for Recycling

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 5/1/2023 - Pesticide Container Pickup Planning
2. 5/1/2023 - Antwerp Township Transfer Station Electrical and Fencing Meeting



Van Buren Conservation District
May 2023 Resource Recovery Board Report
Prepared June 2023
Staff: Kalli Marshall Jacob Diljak

3. 5/1/2023 - Summer School Planning
4. 5/1/2023 - Village of Decatur Council Meeting
5. 5/2/2023, 5/16/2023, 5/23/2023, 5/30/2023 - Staff Meeting
6. 5/2/2023 - Tree Seedling Recap Meeting
7. 5/2/2023 - Village of Breedsville Council Meeting
8. 5/3/2023, 5/15/2023 - Admin team meeting
9. 5/4/2023 - Macroinvertebrate Sampling prep and packing
10. 5/7/2023 - Macroinvertebrate Sampling
11. 5/9/2023 -5/11/2023 - Michigan Recycling Coalition Conference
12. 5/17/2023 - Sheep Shearing
13. 5/17/2023 - Hartford Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronics Collection
14. 5/18/2023 - Recycling Solutions Hub: Program Walkthrough
15. 5/22/2023 - Village of Mattawan Council Meeting
16. 5/23/2023 - Gobles Summer School Planning
17. 5/23/2023 - Van Buren County Meetings
18. 5/24/2023 - VBCD Board Meeting
19. 5/25/2023 - SW Michigan Sustainable Materials Management Regional Meeting
20. 5/25/2023 - Supervisors Meeting
21. 5/26/2023 - Site Visits with CISMA

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. 2023 Michigan EGLE Recycling Infrastructure Grant

Upcoming Activities

1. Prepare compost video for Paw Paw Library
2. Prepare Resource Recovery Management Plan for Growers
3. Research/develop A*Syst Program booklets for restaurants, organizations, growers, schools, homes, municipalities
4. Hang Recycle, MI signs somewhere impactful
5. Hartford School Recycling Collaboration
6. School Education Planning



Van Buren Conservation District
May 2023 Resource Recovery Board Report
Prepared June 2023
Staff: Kalli Marshall Jacob Diljak

Photos

