



Van Buren Conservation District
August 2023 Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects Board Report
Prepared 9/13/23

Staff: Colleen Forestieri Erin Fuller Carlie Southland

Highlight

The Van Buren Conservation District staff held an on-farm field Day on August 17, 2023 with over 60 attendees. Staff presented information on the MAEAP program, drainage water management and antimicrobial resistance. Attendees toured the farm to see and learn about benefits of cover crops and other conservation practices installed by the host, Stochierro Farms.

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

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Water sampling from tile drains and streams 8/2/23, 8/17/23, 8/31/23
2. Farmer meetings
3. Prep for fall cover crop applications
4. Developed and distributed farm newsletter 8/2/23
5. Worked with farmer to apply amendments to alfalfa field to increase phosphorus uptake 8/3/2023
6. MAEAP Farm Field Day 8/17/23

Upcoming Activities

1. Water sampling from tile drains and streams 9/14/23, 9/28/23
2. Fix leaking water control structures
3. Fall cover crop applications, September 2023
4. Farming for the Future conference prep meeting 9/19/23
5. U of M Cover Crops & Nutrients field day 9/22/23

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

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Team video conferences
2. Outreach planning
3. Developed and distribute farm newsletter 8/2/23
4. Quarterly report submitted 8/4/23
5. Team meeting to discuss outreach 8/16/23



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6. Farm Field Day 8/17/23
7. Team meeting to discuss outreach 8/30/23

Upcoming Activities

1. Wrap up meeting 9/7/23
2. Project extended through 9/1/2023
3. Grant close-out

USDA - AFRI (Notre Dame)

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Continue outreach activities
2. Developed and distribute farm newsletter 8/2/23
3. Farm Field Day 8/17/23
4. Quarterly reporting submitted 8/23/23

Upcoming Activities

1. Farming for the FUTURE conference prep meeting 9/19/23

Other

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Weekly staff meetings
2. Social media tasks
3. Ag and WQ Team meeting 8/1/23
4. Fuller "Hike with a Naturalist" 8/2/23
5. Fuller LincPass renewal in Lansing 8/2/23
6. Recycle Roundup 8/5/23
7. Farm Bureau board meeting 8/7/23
8. Summer education at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery 8/10/23
9. Staff retreat 8/18/23
10. Southland bi-annual review 8/21/2023
11. Forestieri bi-annual review 8/22/2023
12. Fuller LincPass pickup in Lansing 8/23/23
13. Healthy Water Week 8/22 - 8/25/23
14. MNPS Outreach team meeting 8/29/23
15. GLRI "Lakes & Trees" grant application meeting 8/31/23



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Upcoming Activities

1. Ag and WQ Team meeting 9/5/23
2. Internal GLRI "Lakes & Trees" grant application meeting 9/5/23
3. GLRI grant webinar 9/5/23
4. Staff photos 9/6/23
5. Attend the KBS LTAR Field Day 9/15/23
6. NACD Climate Smart Commodities grant discussion 9/21/23

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. NA

Photos

Senior Conservation Specialist Colleen Forestieri shows off a cover cropped field at the MAEAP Farm Field Day on August 17, 2023.





SW x SW Corner CISMA

August 2023 Board Report

Prepared August 2023

Staff: Alex Florian Abigale Bristol Caleigh Dahn Jena Johnson

Highlights

August was a busy month for the CISMA. After receiving the contract for our Forest Service GLRI grant, we were finally able to begin treatments and surveys for that grant. We also held hikes and paddles to help educate the public in invasive species on the land and in the water. Work has also begun on treatments for the Van Buren County Road Commission. Conversations with the Van Buren Drain Commissioner are underway regarding surveys and treatment options for Japanese knotweed and invasive *Phragmites* within county drains.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Finished up stiltgrass treatments for the season
2. Helped our sister CISMA, BCK, manage mile-a-minute weed in Barry County
3. Hike with a naturalist at TK Lawless park
4. Hike with a naturalist at Russ Forest
5. Co-hosted a Michigan Paddle Stewards train the trainer event with Michigan Sea Grant
6. Assisted EGLE with yellow floating heart removal at Sarett Nature Center
7. Presented at the Van Buren County MAEAP Field day about spotted Lanternfly
8. Held a paddle with a naturalist at Van Auken Lake
9. Began treatment for GLRI grant
10. Conducted a survey for the GLRI
11. Began treating invasive *Phragmites* and Japanese knotweed along Van Buren County Road
12. Set up a booth at the Lawrence Farmers Market
13. Completed one site visit

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. Van Buren County Road Commission board meeting
2. Met with Van Buren County Drain Commissioner





SW x SW Corner Cisma

August 2023 Board Report

Prepared August 2023

Staff: [Alex Florian](#) [Abigale Bristol](#) [Caleigh Dahn](#) [Jena Johnson](#)

Upcoming Activities

1. Conduct a trial management method for cattail treatments for a GLRI project
2. Coordinate with partners to solidify the winter schedule

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. EGLE | Protecting Van Buren County Coastal Areas Through Outreach and Education | \$24,699.28 | expected decision date January 1, 2024

Concept of the Month: Can we paint our cattail troubles away?

Overview:

Well, it isn't really paint that we're using on invasive plants. But perhaps we can use painting equipment to apply herbicide directly to the leaves of difficult plants like cattails and *Phragmites*. This is a simple method created by super-volunteer, Dan Burton. He has tested this idea throughout Southwest Michigan with good results. The method is still new, but the Cisma Strike Team has picked up on the idea and will start using it at some of our treatment locations.

Using a paint roller on a long pole and a bucket of herbicide, we can walk through a thick stand of cattails or *Phragmites* and swipe many stems at once. Dan has provided the Strike Team with a starter kit for this method, and we will have our first trial of the method this coming September.

The split bucket allows us to carry a small amount of herbicide through a stand of cattails or *Phragmites*, a jug of extra herbicide, and extra PPE. Dan installed a paint grate along the inner wall to squeeze out excess herbicide from the paint roller. We will trial this method this September on cattails, and look forward to reviewing the results! For more information, shoot [Abbie](#) an email.





Van Buren Conservation District

August 2023 MAEAP Board Report

Prepared September 2023

Staff: Kyle Mead



Highlights:

August was a bit slower for farm appointments, assessments, and verifications but this is because the specialist was putting the final touches on and preparing for his MAEAP Field Day at Stocchiero Farms. The Field Day was a success with many new farmers attending and filling out Phase I contact forms so that they can begin their work on a MAEAP Verification. The specialist has worked hard this year trying to get as close to 100% of the Re-Verifications done as possible while also looking for new Verifications. The MAEAP Tech Consistency training was a good day of networking with the other SW Technicians and training on how we can assess and report our work to the same standard.

Percentage Completed: 82.0% of required assessments completed

41.4% of verifications

Activities, Accomplishments, & Challenges

1. 8/9 – Water test for grower
2. 8/10 – MAEAP Tech Quarterly
3. 8/14 – Farm assessment – Mattawan
4. 8/16 – Field Day setup
5. 8/17 – MAEAP Field Day – Bangor
6. 8/28 – Farm Assessment – Vicksburg
7. 8/29 – Farm followup for verification
8. 8/30 – Verification in Lawton

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 8/21 – Mead work review
2. 8/23 – VBCD Board Meeting
3. 8/31 – MAEAP Tech Consistency Training



Van Buren Conservation District

August 2023 MAEAP Board Report

Prepared September 2023

Staff: Kyle Mead



A*Syst Type	Monthly A*Systs	Fiscal Year to Date A*Systs
Farm*A*Systs:	1	31
Orchard*A*Systs:	1	18
Greenhouse*A*Systs:	0	2
Nursery*A*Systs:	0	0
Crop*A*Systs:	1	8
Livestock*A*Systs:	1	5
FWHP*A*Systs:	0	0
Total Assessments Completed (always year to date):	4	64/ 78 Goal
On Farm Risk Reductions (always year to date):	Not easily tracked in DB	0 / 150 Goal
MAEAP Verifications (always year to date):	2	24 completed YTD (11FAS, 11CAS, #LAS, FWH) 58 Goal

Photos



Van Buren Conservation District:
August 2023 NACD Technical Assistance
Board Report
Prepared September 2023
Staff: Lucas Hartman



Highlights

Conservation Stewardship Program Enrolment completed for FY2023. 771 new acres engaging in enhanced conservation practices until 2027.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
 - a. All selected applications are now active contracts
 - i. 24 new EQIP contracts addressing a variety of resource concerns.
 - ii. >\$1.2 Million in cost share for landowners adopting new conservation practices.
2. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
 - a. 6 new contracts added to the existing active contracts for Van Buren County
 - i. This brings our total number of Active CSP contracts to 18 for Van Buren County
3. Conservation Operations Technical Assistance (CoTA)
 - a. Continued planning, field visits, resource evaluations, etc. for landowners that are interested in applying to Farm Bill Programs in 2024.
 - i. Providing additional conservation planning assistance and plan production to a variety of landowners not eligible or interested in cost share programs.
4. Upcoming Events
 - a. New Farm Bill in 2024
 - i. Attending a stakeholder meeting with Congresswoman Slotkin (D-MI) to discuss timeline, and objectives of Ag committee on the bill.

New Grant Proposals Submitted

Proposal for NACD TA and Outreach 2023 grant submitted to MACD on July 27th

Offering \$35,000 for a total project budget of \$159,000 to support two conservation planning technicians to aid landowners in Farm Bill Programs.

Currently awaiting selections.



Van Buren Conservation District
August 2023 NRCS CT Board Report
Prepared: September 2023
Staff: Gabriel Francisco



Highlights

Activities & Accomplishments

1. One More Time! - Just when you thought we were all done with the 2023 EQIP, we were surprised at the Van Buren Office this past month that we would have one more applicant get selected for funding bringing approximately another \$20,000 into the county for our area farmers, making our yearly total that NRCS was able to help cost share for our area farmers well past the \$1.5 Million dollars mark in 2023.
2. CSP 2023 Finished - Kami, Lucas, along with Allegan County NRCS Reps AnnMarie Chavez and Gabe Gabarino, and retired Paw Paw NRCS Rep Steve Bare were able to all come together and get everything organized and ready for our CSP 2023 clients!

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 8/2 - South Haven Farmers Market - Farmer Outreach and Engagement
2. 8/4 - Farm Visit, Hartford - Forestry Management Plan, Brush Management, Fencing
3. 8/5 - Recycle Round-Up - South Haven
4. 8/7 - VBYF Fair Board Meeting - Hartford
5. 8/11 - Farm Visit, Lawrence - Certification for Fencing and Shelter Belt
6. 8/17 - MAEAP Field Day - Bangor
7. 8/18 - Staff Outing Day - South Haven
8. 8/23 - Tillers International Grazing Day for WMU and K-College - Scotts
9. 8/24 - Farm Visit, Paw Paw - Fencing, HUPA, Livestock Pipeline, Access Roads
10. 8/28 - Farm Visit, Paw Paw - Fencing, Brush Management, Hayland Replant, Pipeline, Forestry
11. 8/28 - MAEAP Farm Visit, Vicksburg - Livestock-A-Syst

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. NACD CT Grant - Submitted, and awaiting word back.

Upcoming Activities

1. End of Fiscal Year and 2024 EQIP Application Deadline - Deadline for 2024 EQIP is fast approaching on September 30th!



Photos



Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan University Students at the Grazing Day hosted by Tillers International in Scotts, Michigan



Van Buren Conservation District
August 2023 NRCS CT Board Report
Prepared: September 2023
Staff: Gabriel Francisco



New Livestock-A-Syst MAEAP Verified Farm in Vicksburg Michigan



Van Buren Conservation District

August 2023 Outreach Board Report

Prepared 8/31/2023

Staff: **Jacob Diljak**

Highlights

Many well-attended and impactful events happened in August: South Haven Farmers Market, MAEAP Field Day, Hike and Paddle with a Naturalist. Planning for upcoming publications and events saw significant progress in Tree Sale, annual report, and 2024 calendar.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Social media management: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, 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. Paw Paw River Clean Up: partnership coordination, clean up planning
7. Van Buren State Trail Project: signage creation, partnership coordination, clean up planning
8. Healthy Water Week: promotion, water screening
9. VBCD 2024 Calendar: planning, staff coordination, editing
10. VBCD 2023 Annual Report: planning
11. 2024 Food, Farm, & Fun Guide: planning
12. USDA: partnership coordination
13. 2024 Tree Sale: planning, paperwork, order management

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. Staff meetings (8/1, 8/8, 8/15, 8/22)
2. Admin team meetings (8/17, 8/24)
3. Outreach Check-In (8/15)
4. Weekly Outreach Check-In (8/3, 8/24, 8/31)
5. South Haven Farmers Market (8/2)
6. Hike with a Naturalist (8/2) **pictured**
7. Primal Woods Farm Visit (8/4) **pictured**
8. Eagle Scout Tire Disposal Meeting (8/8)
9. South Haven Township Regular Board Meeting (8/9)
10. Summer Education at Wolf Lake (8/10) **pictured**
11. Lawrence Farm Site Visit (8/11) **pictured**
12. Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail/Van Buren State Trail Project Meeting (8/11)
13. Two Rivers Coalition Regular Board Meeting (8/15)



Van Buren Conservation District

August 2023 Outreach Board Report

Prepared 8/31/2023

Staff: **Jacob Diljak**

14. MAEAP Field Day Pre-Set Up Meeting and Set Up (8/16)
15. Bi-annual Check-In (8/16)
16. MAEAP Fruit Field Day (8/17) **pictured**
17. Staff Fun Day (8/18)
18. Healthy Water Week (8/21)
19. Mid-West Family Meeting (8/22)
20. Paddle with a Naturalist (8/22) **pictured**

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. NA

Upcoming Activities

1. Lawrence Farmers Market (9/2)
2. Village of Breedsville Regular Council Meeting (9/5)
3. Staff & Board Photos (9/6)
4. Cobalt Holding Tour (9/14)
5. Paw Paw River Clean Up (9/16)

	Trends	Content	Audience
Facebook	14,278 People Reached	35 Posts	2,569 Page Likes (41 ↑)
Instagram	146 People Reached	30 Posts	234 Followers (5 ↑)
LinkedIn	5 Impressions	0 Posts	48 Followers (5 ↑)
YouTube	Total Views	-	1,030 Subscribers (10 ↑)
TikTok	445 Likes	4 Posts	35 Followers (15 ↑)

Event Category	Number of Events	Impressions
Miscellaneous	2	24
VBCD Events	6	200
Farmers Markets	1	151



Van Buren Conservation District
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Prepared 8/31/2023
Staff: Jacob Diljak



Conservation Technician Gabriel Francisco identifying tree species during a site visit to discover NRCS cost-share opportunities (8/4).



Admin Associate Lia Will and Water Quality Project Manager Erin Fuller educating members of the public during our Hike with a Naturalist event at Ross Coastal Plain Marsh Preserve in Covert (8/4).



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Staff: Jacob Diljak



Conservation Associate Carlie Southland leading natural journaling during the summer education program at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery (8/10).



Colleen Forestieri discussing cover crop cocktail mix at the MAEAP Field Day at Stocchiero Farms in Bangor (8/17).



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Staff: **Jacob Diljak**



Conservation Technicians Lucas Hartman and Gabe Francisco with Kami Williams of NRCS conducting a site visit at a Farm in Lawrence Township (8/11).



CISMA Coordinator Alex Florian talking to Paddle with a Naturalist attendees on VanAuken Lake in Bangor (8/22).

Produce Safety Monthly Report

August 1, 2023 – August 31, 2023



Completed

- Pick up materials Allegan DNR Field Office (8/2)
- Water Testing Bangor (8/3)
- Farm Visit Fennville (8/4)
- Farm Visit Paw Paw (8/5)
- Set up Berrien Youth Fair (8/11)
- Farm Visit Lawton (8/14)
- Berrien Youth Fair Booth (8/15)
- Farm Visit Grand Junction (8/15)
- Berrien Youth Fair Booth (8/16)
- Berrien Youth Fair Booth (8/17)
- Water Testing Grand Junction (8/23)
- Farm Visit Battle Creek (8/24)
- Monthly Huddle (8/25) Canceled.
- Monthly tech Meeting (8/25) Canceled.
- Produce Safety team PD meeting (8/25) Canceled.
- Farm Visit Berrien Springs (8/28)
- Farm Visit Buchanan (8/28)
- Farm Visit Battle Creek (8/29)
- Farm Visit Grand Junction (8/31)
- Ongoing work with growers on Produce Safety Plans
- Ongoing work with growers towards certificate
- Ongoing phone and email contact with growers

Upcoming

County	Allegan	Berrien	Calhoun	Van Buren
Farm Visits	1	2	2	6



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



Highlights

In August we had a great time holding the 2023 Recycle Roundup Collection Event in South Haven. We collected tons of materials at the event where we serviced 200 households. We also presented our quarterly report to the Van Buren County Commissioners and also presented the opportunity to work with Southwest Michigan Planning Commission for the Materials Management Planning process for a multi-county materials management plan.

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 August 2023
4. Read resource recovery updates from Michigan Recycling Coalition and EGLE to keep abreast of trends and changes
5. Tracked electronics collection for August 2023
6. Remained up to date with 2023 Scrap Tire Grant requests from partners
7. Worked on community discussions for 2024 Scrap Tire Collections
8. Scheduled recycling events for 2024
9. Kept up with supplies at Battery Recycling Stations
10. Completed Recycling Conservation Corners for publication
11. Processed Invoices from Scrap Tire Grant
12. Rescheduled residents for additional or another collection date
13. Contacted communities for 2024 year round collection sites
14. Reviewed billboard designs prior to printing
15. Updated Rural Electronics Grant Reimbursement Request
16. Continued work with Hartford School from Michigan Green Schools
17. Assisted Columbia Township with additional tire pickup needs

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 8/1/2023, 8/8/2023, 8/22/2023, 8/29/2023 - Staff Meeting
2. 8/1/2023 - Keeler Township Board Meeting
3. 8/2/2023 - Annual Review
4. 8/3/2023 - Recycle Roundup Staff Meeting
5. 8/5/2023 - South Haven Recycle Roundup
6. 8/7/2023 - City of Bangor Council Meeting
7. 8/8/2023 - Presentation County Commissioners



Van Buren Conservation District

August 2023 Resource Recovery Board Report

Prepared September 2023

Staff: Kalli Marshall Jacob Diljak

8. 8/9/2023 - Community Solutions Hub Interview
9. 8/13-17/2023 - Resource Recycling National Conference
10. 8/21/2023 - West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum Annual Meeting
11. 8/23/2023 - Healthy Water Week
12. 8/25/2023 - Diversys Meeting/ pilot
13. 8/30/2023 - Bloomingdale Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronic Recycling event
14. 8/31/2023 - Advanced Recycling Webinar

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. Na

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

Photos

