



Van Buren Conservation District  
October 2023 Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects Board Report  
Prepared 10/31/23

Staff: Colleen Forestieri Erin Fuller Carlie Southland

### Highlight

In September, Van Buren Conservation District staff completed a three-year grant project with Xylem Inc. and the University of Notre Dame. The project explored innovative approaches to managing farm runoff from tile lines. The team installed sensors in water control structures at the edge of a farm field to track nutrient loss and soil moisture levels. The research provides support for a real-time control system that will enable farmers to monitor and control their tile runoff which would ultimately reduce nutrient loss and provide optimal soil moisture for crops. This project was funded by the Great Lakes Protection Fund.

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

##### Activities & Accomplishments

1. Water sampling from tile drains and streams 10/12/23, 10/26/23
2. Farmer meetings
3. Prep for post-harvest cover crop applications
4. Meeting w/ Xylem, Inc. 10/18/23
5. Fix leaking water control structures
6. Farming for the Future conference prep meeting 10/24/23
7. Quarterly report submitted 10/4/23

##### Upcoming Activities

1. Water sampling from tile drains and streams 11/9/23, 11/20/23
2. Fix leaking water control structures
3. Work with farmers to install post harvest cover crops
4. Farming for the Future conference prep meeting 11/21/23

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

##### Activities & Accomplishments

1. Final report submitted 10/5/23



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## USDA – Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Project (Notre Dame)

### Activities & Accomplishments

1. Continue outreach activities
2. Quarterly reporting submitted 10/10/23
3. Farming for the Future conference prep meeting 10/24/23

### Upcoming Activities

1. Continue outreach activities

## Other

### Activities & Accomplishments

1. Weekly staff meetings
2. Social media tasks
3. Ag and WQ Team meeting 10/3/23
4. Lakes & Trees GLRI grant meeting 10/3/23
5. VBDL/VBCD Programming discussion 10/3/23
6. Lakes & Trees GLRI grant meeting 10/5/23
7. Backyard Symposium meeting 10/5/23
8. Backyard Symposium meeting 10/12/23
9. Pre Recycle Roundup meeting 10/12/23
10. Recycle Roundup 10/14/23
11. EGLE 319 grant webinar 10/17/23
12. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Forest Restoration grant writing
13. Call w/ Jennifer Kanine re: EGLE 319 grant 10/24/23
14. Call w/ UND re: EGLE 319 grant 10/26/23
15. FY24 Ag/Water Quality Strategy Discussion 10/31/23

### Upcoming Activities

1. Work Agreement meeting 11/1/23
2. Water Quality Team mtg 11/7/23
3. EGLE 319 grant writing (due 11/15/23)
4. Staff retreat 11/16/23

### New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. Submitted Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Forest Restoration grant



application 10/24/23 (deadline extended to 10/27/23)

## Photos

*Senior Conservation Specialist Colleen Forestieri stands next to a maintenance hole containing a variety of sensors that monitor soil moisture and nutrient loss at the edge of a farm field. (photo from September 2021)*





## SW x SW Corner Cisma

October 2023 Board Report

Prepared 11/02/2023

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

### Highlights

This month, the Cisma team wrote applications for three grants, one to the Forest Service's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Cooperative Weed Management Area grant program, and two to the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (MISGP). Management of *Phragmites* and Japanese knotweed along Van Buren county rights-of-way concluded for 2023. Spotted lanternfly traps were checked and removed from survey locations. No spotted lanternfly were detected in our service area.

### Activities & Accomplishments

1. Abbie, Alex, and Jena helped lead a stream monitoring event with Two Rivers Coalition (TRC)
2. The Cisma team wrote two MISGP grants, one for core funding and one to respond to Hydrilla
3. The Cisma applied to the US Forest Service Cisma-specific GLRI grant program.
4. Alex assisted with the October Recycle roundup in Lawrence.
5. Warm-weather Strike Team management concluded
6. Strike Team completed *Phragmites* management for a fee for service contract

### Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. Michigan Invasive Species Conference (MISC) annual meeting planning committee
2. The Stewardship Network (TSN) Coordinator Summit
3. Abbie attended the Camp Tamarack Conservation Committee (Boy Scouts) in Jones

### Upcoming Activities

1. MISGP reporting
2. Berrien County Road Department Presentation
3. TRC annual meeting
4. Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species meeting
5. European Frogbit Collaborative Meeting
6. Management contracted with Chikaming Open Lands



## SW x SW Corner Cisma

October 2023 Board Report

Prepared 11/02/2023

Staff: Alex Florian Abigale Bristol Jena Johnson

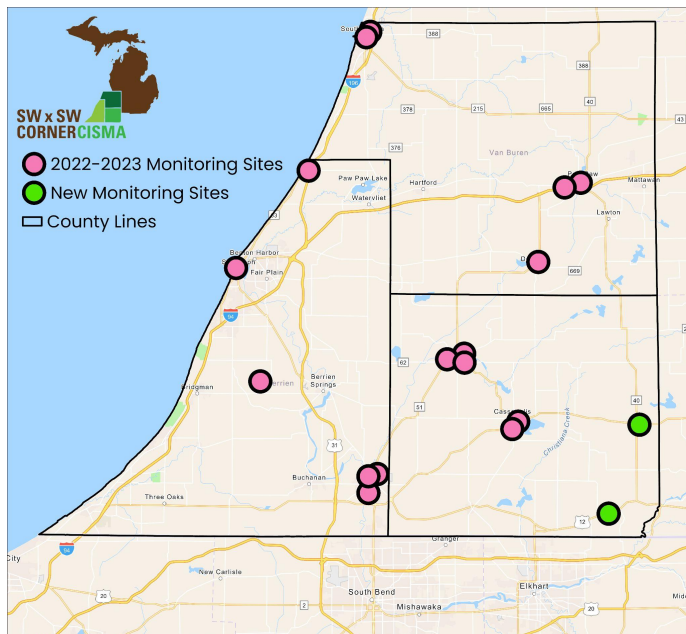
### New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. United States Forest Service | Consistent and Effective Invasive Plant Control Throughout the Jones Conservation Corridor | \$91,146 project cost | expected decision date not provided (Abbie inquired to grant contact)
2. Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program | Core Grant | \$70,000 project cost | Expected decision date March 2024
3. Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program | EDRR for Hydrilla and Other Watchlist AIS in Southwest Michigan | \$88,910 project cost | Expected decision date March 2024
4. Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program | Consistent and Effective Invasive Plant Control Throughout the Jones Conservation Corridor | \$30,000 project cost | Expected decision date March 2024
5. Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program | Outreach and Mapping of High Priority Invasive Plants | \$10,000 project cost | Expected decision date March 2024

### Species of the Month: Spotted Lanternfly Range Expansion

#### Overview:

1. Spotted Lanternfly was detected in Elkhart, Indiana in September.
2. The few sites that have been identified are along railroads between Elkhart and Mishawaka.
3. For the past two years, the Cisma has been monitoring traps for spotted lanternfly, we have not found any spotted lanternfly in our service area.
4. In response to this new detection, we added 2 sites along major roads out of Elkhart. (see map)





## SW x SW Corner Cisma

October 2023 Board Report

Prepared 11/02/2023

Staff: Alex Florian Abigale Bristol Jena Johnson

### Identification:

1. Brown Forewings with spots
2. Red and black hind wings
3. Yellow stripes on the outside of the torso
4. About 1 inch long





## Van Buren Conservation District

October 2023 MAEAP Board Report

Prepared November 2023

Staff: Kyle Mead



### Highlights:

The specialist started reaching out to farmers that were due for Re-verification towards the end of last fiscal year, which allowed him to start with Re-Assessments at the start of FY24. The specialist has some of those farms already scheduled for Re-Verification in November along with some new Verifications. The state is setting a base goal of 12 New MAEAP Verifications for each technician. This would get MAEAP to its statewide goal of 500 new Verifications for the FY.

Percentage Completed: 0.00% of required assessments completed

0.00% of verifications

### Activities, Accomplishments, & Challenges

1. 10/4 – FWHP New-Assessment – Decatur
2. 10/12 – FWHP Pre-Assessment visit – Paw Paw
3. 10/17 – Media day for New Verification – Vicksburg
4. 10/18 – FWHP New-Assessment – Decatur
5. 10/20 – Hung “no hunting” signs at Haydon Woods
6. 10/26 – MAEAP Re-Assessment – Bloomingdale

### Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 10/3 – Paw Paw Conservation Club Meeting
2. 10/5 – Envirothon Meeting
3. 10/13 – Ag Check-in Meeting at VBCD
4. 10/16 – Envirothon Website and Social Media Meeting with MACD
5. 10/23 – Kalamazoo MAEAP Goal Setting Meeting
6. 10/27 – Farm Bill/Grower Meeting – VBCD
7. 10/31 – Ag/Wq Strategy Meeting – VBCD



Van Buren Conservation District

October 2023 MAEAP Board Report

Prepared November 2023

Staff: Kyle Mead



A*Syst Type	Monthly A*Systs	Fiscal Year to Date A*Systs
Farm*A*Systs:	3	
Orchard*A*Systs:	11	
Greenhouse*A*Systs:		
Nursery*A*Systs:		
Crop*A*Systs:		
Livestock*A*Systs:		
FWHP*A*Systs:	2	
Total Assessments Completed (always year to date):	16	
On Farm Risk Reductions (always year to date):		
MAEAP Verifications (always year to date):		completed YTD (FAS, CAS, LAS, FWH) xx Goal

Photos





Van Buren Conservation District:  
October 2023 NACD Technical Assistance  
Board Report  
Prepared November 2023  
Staff: Lucas Hartman



## Highlights

New application processing protocol for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) will allow conservation district staff to drastically reduce wait time for Farm Bill conservation program applicants. The EQIP application deadline is November 17.

## Activities & Accomplishments

1. Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
  - a. Helping new customers with planning for 2024 application cycle, updating farm records with the Farm Service Agency (FSA), and fulfilling program eligibility requirements.
  - b. Performing conservation practice certification, and payment processing for active contracts
    - i. Cover crops
    - ii. Nutrient management
    - iii. Pasture enhancements
    - iv. Forest management plans
    - v. Forest stand improvement
    - vi. Conservation cover, and pollinator plantings
2. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
  - a. Performing Enhanced conservation practice certification, and processing payments for all active contracts
    - i. Many of our active contracts are focussed on enhanced cover cropping techniques, and precision nutrient management activities.
3. Conservation Operations Technical Assistance (CoTA)
  - a. Currently developing one plan for a new customer not interested in any cost share programs from USDA.
    - i. Elevated water table concerns in forested and wetland habitat.
    - ii. Planning for future timber harvest, invasive species management, and erosion from new springs.



Van Buren Conservation District:  
October 2023 NACD Technical Assistance  
Board Report  
Prepared November 2023  
Staff: Lucas Hartman



## Upcoming Events

1. New Farm Bill in 2024
  - a. New farm bill is expected to go into effect in December 2023.
  - b. The new bill will include additional and reorganized spending for conservation practices through the USDA
2. New EQIP protocol for FY2024 – “ACT NOW”
  - a. ACT NOW will allow field office to expedite the funding process for those plans that include a limited number of conservation practices
    - i. ex// Forest management plans, cover crop, field borders, nutrient management, etc.
    - ii. This will allow the Paw Paw field office to decrease wait times for customers interested in cost share for smaller projects.

## New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. Proposal for NACD TA and Outreach 2023 grant submitted to MACD on July 27
  - a. Offering \$35,000 of matching funds for a total project budget of \$159,000 to support two conservation planning technicians to aid landowners in Farm Bill Programs.
  - b. Currently awaiting selections



Van Buren Conservation District  
October 2023 NRCS CT Board Report  
Prepared: November 2023  
Staff: Gabriel Francisco



## Highlights

### Activities & Accomplishments

1. The technician and the MAEAP specialist worked together to verify Tending Tilth LLC, a prescribed grazing business. Tending Tilth is now one of the very first contracted grazing businesses in the state to be environmentally verified through the MAEAP program. This partnership with Tending Tilth started at our yearly grazing day at Windshadow farm this past summer. Since then, Lauren and her Tending Tilth interns have become a common face at many of our field days and community events. One of the most important sites that we were able to get MAEAP verification for Tending Tilth was at the Mill at Vicksburg. This former paper mill located along Portage Creek is a designated brownfield site by the state of Michigan. Through amazingly hard work and dedication by everyone involved, it has risen and grown past that damaging moniker and is now a model of sustainability and environmental success.

### Meetings/Trainings Attended and Farm Visited

1. 10/5/23 - CSC Grant Meeting
2. 10/11/23 - CSC Grant Final Meeting and Edit
3. 10/13/23 - CD Ag Team Meeting
4. 10/13/23 - Farm Visit - South Haven (Dairy Cattle, Chickens, Pigs, Forestry)
5. 10/14/23 - CSC Letter of Concept Submission
6. 10/17/23 - MAEAP Media Day for Tending Tilth LLC- The Mill at Vicksburg
7. 10/17/23 - NRCS "IRA-Act Now" Meeting
8. 10/18/23 - Farm Visit - Bloomingdale (Access Road)
9. 10/19/23 - Farm Visit - Mattawan (Brush Management, Forestry, Prescribed Grazing)
10. 10/20/23 - Office Visit - Decatur Area Farmer
11. 10/24/23 - Farming for the Future Meeting
12. 10/24/23 - Potential Farm Site Assessment - Paw Paw
13. 10/26/23 - Farm Visit - Paw Paw (Horses, Reseeding, Prescribed Grazing)
14. 10/26/23 - Van Buren Youth Fair Board Meeting
15. 10/27/23 - Office Meeting - Paw Paw Area Farmer
16. 10/31/23 - Office Meeting - Bloomingdale Area Farmer



## New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. Climate Smart Commodities (CSC) Grant - NACD
  - a. Letter of Concept submitted - feedback expected December 2023

## Upcoming Activities

## Photos



MAEAP Media Day at The Mill at Vicksburg - Lauren Burns (Tending Tilth LLC), Gabriel Francisco, Kyle Mead



## Van Buren Conservation District

October 2023 Outreach Board Report

Prepared 10/31/2023

Staff: **Jacob Diljak**

### Highlights

Publications and projects are underway for public outreach: the annual report; calendar; Food, Farm, & Fun Guide; Tree Sale; and Backyard Symposium. Stay tuned for more updates on these fun, impactful projects!

### 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. 2024 Food, Farm, & Fun Guide: design coordination, advertiser work
7. 2024 VBCD Calendar: design work, revision, first draft complete
8. 2023 Annual Report: first draft and design work
9. 2024 Backyard Symposium: planning, speaker outreach
10. 2024 Tree Sale: planning, initial work, vendor and order coordination
11. Paw Paw River Clean Up: grant reporting
12. Covert Harvest Festival: outreach materials for municipal festival
13. 2024 Billboards: planning and coordination

### Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. Staff meetings (10/3, 10/24)
2. Admin team meetings (10/4)
3. Outreach Check-In (10/27)
4. 1:1 Outreach Check-in (10/13)
5. Macroinvertebrate Stream Monitoring (10/1) **pictured**
6. Where the Sidewalk Ends: Choosing Resilient Trees for Tomorrow's Urban Environments (10/3)
7. Canva Training (10/4)
8. 2024 VBCD Calendar Final Draft Review (10/4)
9. Backyard Symposium Planning Meeting (10/5)
10. Paw Paw River: Grant Reporting Meeting (10/5)
11. Backyard Symposium Meetings (10/12)
12. Slack Training Session with CDEM (10/24)
13. People's Back to School Garden (10/26)
14. Nature in Focus: Tips for Photographing Nature (10/26)
15. Cover Crop Photography (10/31) **pictured**



Van Buren Conservation District  
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 Prepared 10/31/2023  
 Staff: **Jacob Diljak**

### New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. NA

### Upcoming Activities

1. Waverly Township Regular Board Meeting (11/2)
2. Village of Decatur Regular Council Meeting (11/6)
3. VBCD Regular Board Meeting (11/8)
4. Two Rivers Coalition Annual Meeting (11/8)
5. Staff Team Building Day (11/16)
6. Village of Paw Paw Regular Council Meeting (11/27)

	Trends	Content	Audience
Facebook	7,013 People Reached	23 Posts	2,596 Page Followers (10 ↑)
Instagram	239 People Reached	19 Posts	243 Followers (5 ↑)
LinkedIn	96 Impressions	1 Posts	47 Followers (0 ↑)
YouTube	154,991 Total Views	-	1,050 Subscribers (10 ↑)
TikTok	46 Likes	3 Posts	37 Followers (0 ↑)

Event Category	Number of Events	Impressions
Miscellaneous	0	0
VBCD Events	1	14
Farmers Markets	0	0



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Dan Burton of Two Rivers Coalition and Strike Team Coordinator Abigale Bristol collecting insects on the South Branch of the Black River during Macroinvertebrate Stream Monitoring (10/1)



Senior Conservation Specialist Colleen Forestieri in a 19-way cover crop field in Hartford Township (10/31)



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



## Highlights

We wrapped the recycling event season in October with the Lawrence Recycle Roundup on Saturday October 14. It was a cold and rainy day, but we served 185 households to collect household hazardous waste, tires, electronics, paper for shredding, and foam. Kalli ended the month with a presentation to the South Haven Rotary Club titled "Beyond the Bin".

## 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 October 2023
4. Read resource recovery updates from Michigan Recycling Coalition and EGLE to keep informed of trends and changes
5. Tracked electronics collection for October 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. Resupplied Battery Recycling Stations
10. Processed Invoices from Scrap Tire Grant
11. Held discussions and planning for EGLE Infrastructure grant
12. Scheduled Presentations with schools for youth recycling education

## Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 10/10/2023, 10/17/2023, 10/31/2023 - Staff Meeting
2. 10/10/2023 - Village of Lawrence Council Meeting
3. 10/11/2023 - EGLE infrastructure Grant Budget Discussion
4. 10/11/2023 - Materials Management Planning Meeting Allegan Co.
5. 10/11/2023 - Paw Paw Middle School Mi Green School Discussion
6. 10/12/2023 - Recycle Roundup Staff Meeting
7. 10/14/2023 - Lawrence Recycle Roundup
8. 10/17/2023 - City of Gobles Council Meeting
9. 10/18/2023 - Materials Management Planning Workgroup
10. 10/18/2023 - Triple Bottom Line Bash West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum
11. 10/20/2023 - MiCorp Volunteer Lake and Stream Monitoring Conference
12. 10/25/2023 - Research and Insights into Behavioral Recycling Changes Webinar
13. 10/31/2023 - South Haven Rotary Club Presentation





## Van Buren Conservation District

October 2023 Resource Recovery Board Report

Prepared November 2023

Staff: Kalli Marshall Jacob Diljak

### 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

