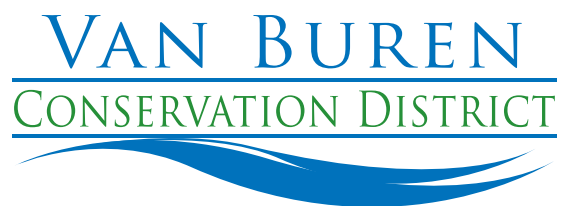


Your Land Your Water **Your Michigan**

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



DEAR RESIDENTS & PARTNERS,



Right-to-left:
Executive Director Emily Hickmott and
Administrator Kimberly Sinclair

Cover Image:
19 Way Cover Crop Cocktail Mix,
Arlington Township (August 2023)

As we complete another year, the Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD) continues to provide high quality natural resource services in record numbers. Here at the VBCD, we strive to find ways to improve our water quality, forest health, farming practices, invasive species management, and recycling.

This year, we offered many opportunities for landowners to hone their conservation skills in real-life situations. We brought in nearly \$1.3 million dollars in Farm Bill contracts, allowing Van Buren County farmers access to federal funding. We also spent many hours securing funding to improve our County's recycling infrastructure. We educated and spoke with thousands of residents about the critical work we do to maintain our natural world. We continue to partner with local officials, municipalities, educators, and other experts in the field to bring the best information available to our community and respond to the needs of our county. Across all of our programs, we got to work with more residents, kids, and volunteers than any prior year. It takes all of us to take care of our land, water, and air - so we've appreciated working with all of you this past year.

As I enter my 15th year with the VBCD, I have decided to return to my original role in finance for the District. I will continue to support and help lead this amazing team of professionals alongside our new Executive Director, Emily Hickmott. Emily previously served as our Deputy Administrator and will lead our VBCD team. It has been my sincere pleasure to recruit, hire, and train some of the best employees I have ever experienced in my career. As I pass the torch, Van Buren County can rest assured that the VBCD has the right folks in place to champion our community's natural resources. It is amazing to me to see how our community seeks to maintain and improve our ability to live alongside our lakes, rivers, and streams and grow its care of these gems for future generations. I thank you for your stewardship and support for our way of life here in Van Buren County.

I hope you will enjoy reading our annual report and fill up with pride when you see how our team is making impacts for our water, land, and air while providing a shining example of what we can achieve together.

All the Best,

Kimberly Sinclair



OUR STAFF

Kimberly Sinclair
Administrator

Emily Hickmott
Deputy Administrator

Jacob Diljak
Outreach Coordinator

Kalli Marshall
Recycling & Materials
Management Coordinator

Lia Will
Administrative Associate

Erin Fuller
Water Quality Project Manager

Colleen Forestieri
Senior Conservation Specialist

Carlie Southland
Conservation Associate

Kyle Mead
Senior MAEAP Specialist

Lucas Hartman
Conservation Technician

Gabriel Francisco
Conservation Technician

Alex Florian
CISMA Coordinator

Abigale Bristol
Strike Team Coordinator

Jena Johnson
Strike Team Crew

Caleigh Dahn
Strike Team Crew



*Left-to-right, Back row: Carlie Southland, Erin Fuller, Alex Florian, Gabriel Francisco, Lucas Hartman
Middle row: Jena Johnson, Abigale Bristol, Caleigh Dahn, Kalli Marshall, Colleen Forestieri, Kyle Mead
Front row: Emily Hickmott, Lia Will, Kimberly Sinclair, Jacob Diljak*

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bill VanTassel
Chairperson

Jan Petersen
Vice-Chairperson

Carl Druskovich
Treasurer

Paulette Rybarski
Secretary

Ron Klein
Member



*Left-to-right, Back row: Ron Klein, Carl Druskovich, Bill VanTassel
Front row: Jan Petersen, Paulette Rybarski*

OUR PARTNERS

Conservation cannot be done without the hard work and dedication of a community.

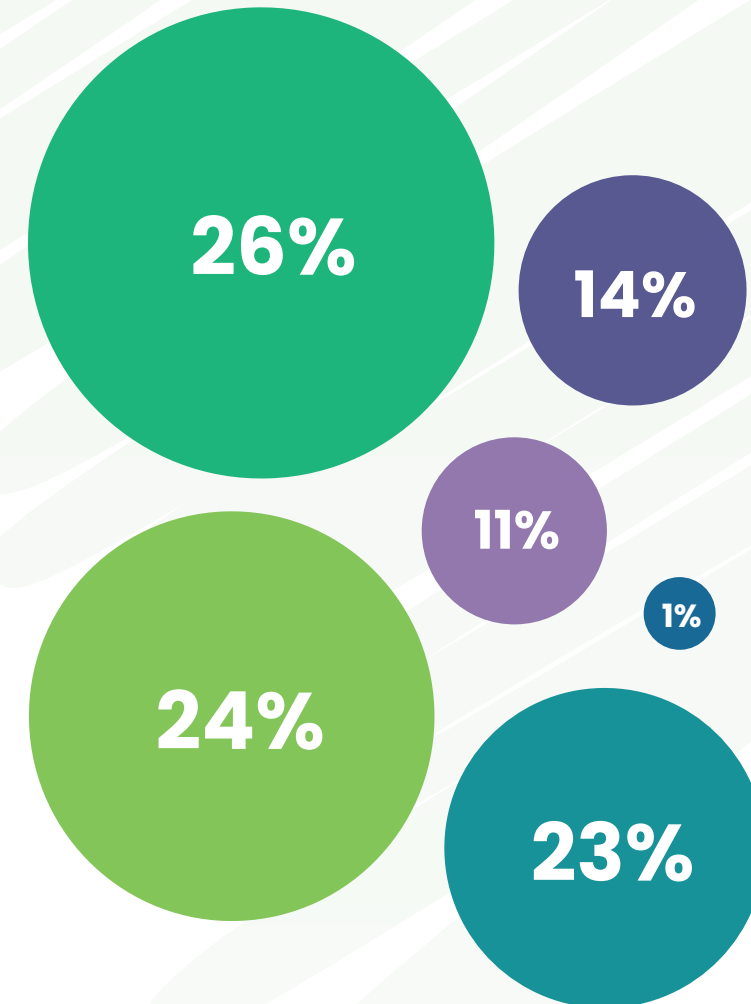
We are grateful to all of our partners for their conservation work.



CONSERVATION TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

EXPENDITURES

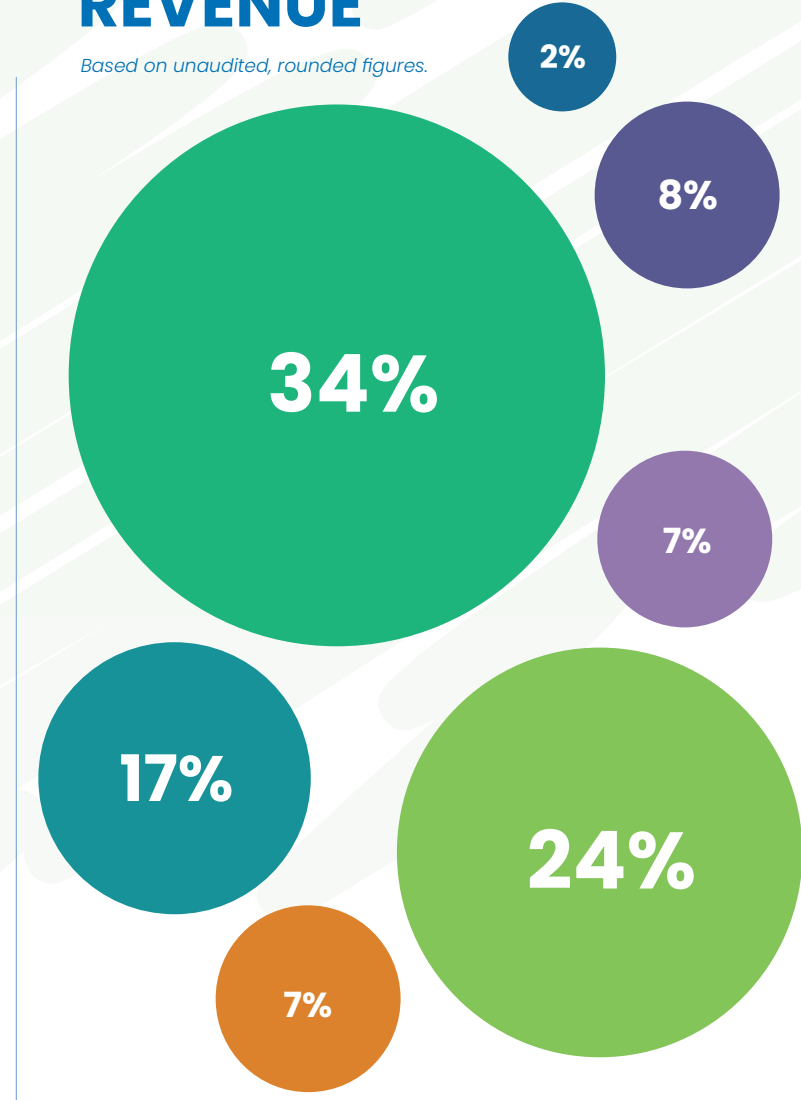
Based on unaudited, rounded figures.



Water Quality	\$394,763.48
Agriculture	\$368,916.05
Operations	\$357,849.33
Resource Recovery & Recycling	\$214,713.73
Invasive Species	\$174,780.05
Reforestation	\$18,417.95
Total	\$1,529,440.59

REVENUE

Based on unaudited, rounded figures.



Federal Grants	\$503,230.54
VBCD Operations Millage	\$354,875.81
State Grants	\$249,151.19
Charges for Services	\$113,091.68
County, Township, Village, & City Recycling Contribution	\$110,994.75
Other (includes: Other Revenues, Rental Equipment Fees, Interest, Local Grants)	\$100,424.97
Tree Sales & Other Goods	\$29,602.97
Total	\$1,461,371.91

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Agriculture/Water Quality Projects

- 288 water samples collected
- \$149,478 paid to farmers for conservation practices
- 388 tons of sediment runoff prevented due to conservation practices on farms
- 5,407 acres of cover crops planted via airplane
- 1,031 acres of cover crops planted via tractor

Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)/Equipment Rentals

- 797 acres planted with conservation equipment
- 12 new assessments
- 22 re-assessments
- 9 new verifications
- 19 reverifications

Natural Resource Technical Assistance

Technical and Financial Assistance Programs:

EQIP = Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- 31 contracts
- \$1,240,974 allocated to program participants
- 620 acres committed to program
- \$2,001 average spent per acre enrolled in EQIP

CSP = Conservation Stewardship Program

- 6 contracts
- \$214,140 allocated to program participants
- 771 acres committed to program
- \$277 spent per acre enrolled in CSP

Resource Recovery & Recycling

- 12 collection event days
- 1,118 households served at collection events
- 9 categories of services
- 11,229 passenger and semi tires recycled
- 50.8 tons of large equipment and tractor tires recycled
- 24,580 pounds of household hazardous waste (chemicals + pesticides) processed
- 15,658 pounds of paint disposed of responsibly
- 1,033 pounds of batteries recycled
- 9,000 pounds of confidential paper shredded and recycled
- 87,388 pounds of electronics recycled
- 57,440 pounds of mixed paper recycled
- 44,860 pounds of cardboard recycled
- 475 agriculture pesticide containers recycled
- 985 pounds of foam (Styrofoam™/polystyrene) recycled

SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area)

- 376,762 people educated:
Passive outreach: 375,689
Active outreach: 1,073
- 18 acres treated for invasive species
- 55 road commission sites
- 4 kudzu sites
- 1 stiltgrass site
- 360 acres surveyed for invasive species
- 2 new high priority invasive species found
- 16 spotted lanternfly trapping locations (no detections)

Operations

- 31,960 tax bill inserts mailed out
- 10 billboards posted
- Twice-monthly Conservation Corner articles published in up to 4 Van Buren newspapers
- 95,042 people reached through social media
Facebook: 69,787
Instagram: 535
LinkedIn: 57
TikTok: 1,494
YouTube videos: 23,169
- 6 articles written for Farmers Exchange
- 7,000 Food, Farm, & Fun Guides distributed
- 9 water screenings conducted

Educational Workshops:

- Spring Break Presentation at the Maritime Museum
- Summer Education at Wolf Lake Fish Hatchery
- Hikes and Paddles with a Naturalist
- Backyard Symposium
- Earth Day presentations
- Healthy Water Week
- Support of partner events

Mini Grants:

Maple Grove Elementary Outdoor Education and Hartford High School Recycling Bins

Reforestation

16,950 tree & shrub seedlings sold or donated



Administrator Kim Sinclair and Recycling Coordinator Kalli Marshall with mini-grant award recipients Hartford High School Go Green Club (January 2023)

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2023, WE...

- Sold and donated **nearly 17,000** native seedlings! That is a forest about the size of Maple Lake!
- Celebrated Water Quality Specialist **Erin Fuller's 20 years of service** at the Van Buren Conservation District
- Completed the **third year** of our invasive species management Strike Team
- Conducted our **tenth consecutive year** of monitoring water quality in the Paw Paw and Black Rivers through Macroinvertebrate Stream Monitoring
- Completed the **second year** of our summer education program
- Added 8 battery recycling stations
- Added an electronics recycling site in South Haven
- Held our **first** river clean up since 2019

CONTENTS

- 4 Staff and Board**
- 6 Our Partners**
- 7 Conservation Tax Dollars at Work**
- 8 Accomplishments & Highlights**
- 10 Forests**
- 12 Farms: Soil & Water**
- 16 Water**
- 18 Wildlife**
- 22 Resource Recovery & Recycling**
- 26 Outreach & Education**



FORESTS

Tree Sale

Our annual Tree Seedling Sale aims to reforest our community and raise funds for conservation programs and education. This year, we were excited to add a few new species to our classic choices. We even added dune grass for our lakeshore residents to manage erosion. We proudly sold and donated 16,950 native tree and shrub seedlings to over 250 customers in April 2023.



Water Quality Project Manager Erin Fuller and Conservation Technician Gabriel Francisco sorting Tree Sale orders (April 2023)

Next page, Top image: Deputy Administrator Emily Hickmott with Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail members Carol Harris and Mark Johnson cleaning up trash along the Van Buren State Trail (September 2023)

Covert Township (June 2023)



Van Buren State Trail Project

This community beautification project focuses on the Van Buren State Trail. A clean up event cleared 12 bags of trash from the trail. Coming in 2024, trail signage will be created and installed. Signage will inform trail users of trail characteristics and history. Funding provided by Keep Michigan Beautiful, Inc, the Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail, and the Van Buren Conservation District millage.

Haydon Woods

Haydon Woods is another VBCD-owned property with forests and vernal ponds. Vernal ponds are an important habitat. They have distinct and rare wildlife and plants not found anywhere else. Like Butterfield Drain, the VBCD maintains the property's habitat through conservation practices.

Conservation Technician and property manager Lucas Hartman during the Butterfield Drain prescribed burn (April 2023)

Butterfield Drain

Butterfield Drain is a VBCD-owned property with a conservation easement. Butterfield Drain has 240 acres of woods, grassland, and wetland. The VBCD does more than write conservation plans; we put them in place on the properties we manage. This year, we conducted a prescribed burn on 40 acres of the property. This conservation practice helps maintain the wildlife habitat there.





Irrigated corn, Hamilton Township (June 2023)

FARMS: SOIL & WATER



Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) helps farmers and landowners address pollution risks. Our Senior MAEAP Specialist Kyle Mead works with program participants throughout Van Buren County. For over 19 years, Kyle has guided many throughout the process. Reducing pollution risks protects the environment for us all. Farmers and landowners feel pride in their achievement as an environmental steward. You may recognize MAEAP stewards through signs displayed on roadsides.

Dedication to his program and community earned Kyle the Fruit and Vegetable Growers News 40 Under 40 Award.

Senior MAEAP Specialist Kyle Mead receiving the Fruit and Vegetable Growers News 40 Under 40 Award (December 2022)



Farming for the Future

Our annual conference, Farming for the Future, brings farmers and experts together. Farmers get a chance to learn and interact with leading experts. Over 160 farmers connected with local and state resources available to support them. After nationally recognized keynote speaker Neal Kinsey, attendees entered breakout sessions. Three breakout tracks were offered: grain, grazing, and perennial fruit crops. Through events like these, we support Van Buren farmers and bolster our agricultural economy.

Watch our Farming for the Future event on our YouTube channel @VanBurenCD!



Water Quality Project Manager Erin Fuller discussing antimicrobial resistance during Farming for the Future (March 2023)



Top image: Conservation Technician Gabriel Francisco teaching graziers about pasture plants at the Grazing Workshop (June 2023)

Bottom image: Conservation Technician Gabriel Francisco, Water Quality Project Manager Erin Fuller, Conservation Technician Lucas Hartman, and Senior Conservation Specialist Colleen Forestieri with cover crop mixes during MAEAP Field Day (August 2023)

Farm Field Days

Field days provide farmers with tools to be more environmentally-friendly and economically stronger. Through field days, we are able to provide hands-on demonstrations and have open discussions.

Grazing Workshop

Our Grazing Workshop, held in Bangor, brought together 63 graziers and livestock specialists. Livestock specialist Conservation Technician Gabriel Francisco led hands-on demonstrations. Local grazier Ron Klein discussed working with local resources and led a farm tour. Local agency representatives discussed resources and help available to graziers. Events like the Grazing

Workshop support Van Buren County's \$3 million grazing livestock economy.*

MAEAP Field Day

Held in Bangor, our MAEAP Field Day focused on Southwest Michigan fruit and vegetable growers. Sixty-five farmers and landowners learned about local programs and resources and conservation practices. Attendees participated in hands-on demonstrations and took a farm tour. Senior MAEAP Specialist Kyle Mead demonstrated cost-share opportunities for farm buildings. This event helps support Van Buren County's \$118 million dollar fruit and vegetable economy.*

*2017 US Census of Agriculture

Conservation Associate Carlie Southland at a drainage control structure (March 2023)

Drainage Water Management/Nutrient Reduction through Real-Time Optimization & Control

Since 2020, the Van Buren Conservation District has partnered with Xylem, Inc. and the University of Notre Dame to explore approaches to managing farm runoff. Using sensors, the team tracks nutrient loss and moisture levels in farm fields. The results will develop a control system to reduce nutrient loss and optimize soil moisture levels. This project is funded by the Great Lakes Protection Fund.

Mitigating Agricultural Runoff in the Paw Paw River Watershed

This project provides funding for farmers to install conservation practices like no-till, cover crops, and filter strips. The University of Notre Dame is partnering to perform water quality research to help assess the effectiveness of these practices in real-life settings. Field days and educational events help expand knowledge in the farming community. This project is funded by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.



Mitigating Agricultural Runoff in the Pine & Mill Creek Watersheds

Beginning in 2020, this project helps farmers reduce runoff and pollution. Best management practices are cost-shared to help farmers reduce nutrient and pathogen runoff. This project is funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Antimicrobial Resistance in Flowing Waters

Since 2021, the Water Quality Team and the University of Notre Dame have worked together to research antimicrobial resistance in rivers and streams. The project detects and assesses antimicrobial resistance to better understand how to control it. The results will guide development of educational materials and recommendations for farmers. This project is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative.

Natural Resource Technical Assistance

Conservation Technicians Lucas Hartman and Gabriel Francisco provide natural resource technical assistance. Farmers and landowners benefit from identifying concerns, problem-solving, and financial assistance. Both technicians work under the Farm Bill to improve habitat and farms. Funding is provided by the National Association of Conservation Districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Product Safety

The Produce Safety Program helps produce growers with their farm practices. The program includes risk assessment, education, regulation information, and more. Produce Safety Technician Patrick Gordon serves Allegan, Berrien, Kalamazoo, and Van Buren Counties.

Equipment Rental

The Van Buren Conservation District has rental equipment to assist farmers and landowners. The equipment can help with: crop planting, irrigation testing, fertilizer application, soil testing, and invasive species treatment.

No-Till Drills and Seeder:

- John Deere 1590 No-Till Drill
- Brillion SS12 Surestand 12ft Seeder
- Truax U-86 No-Till Drill

Other rentals:

- Soil Test Probe
- Wheel Scales
- Irrigation Uniformity Equipment
- Penetrometer
- Japanese Knotweed Herbicide Injector

To inquire about renting our equipment, contact our office at 269-657-4030 x5. For more information, visit VanBurenCD.org/equipment-lending-rentals/

Brillion SS12 Surestand 12ft Seeder



Previous page, Bottom image: USDA Soil Conservationist Kami Williams with Conservation Technicians Gabriel Francisco and Lucas Hartman at a site visit in Lawrence Township (August 2023)





Paddle with a Naturalist on VanAuken Lake in Bangor (August 2023)

Outreach Coordinator Jacob Diljak and Two Rivers Coalition board member Lisa Adams with trash collected during the Paw Paw River Clean Up (September 2023)



Paw Paw River Clean Up

Trash in our rivers is more than an eyesore. Trash contaminates our drinking water and hurts our environment. In September, the VBCD, Two Rivers Coalition, and volunteers worked together to clean the Paw Paw River. Over 3 miles of the Paw Paw River were cleaned up! Funding was provided by the Michigan Clean Water Corps and the Van Buren Conservation District Operations millage.

Macroinvertebrate Stream Monitoring

For the tenth year, the VBCD partnered with the Two Rivers Coalition to track our water's health. With volunteers, we enter the Paw Paw and Black Rivers to collect macroinvertebrates. Macroinvertebrates are insects, snails, clams, and other species that live in water. Different macroinvertebrates have differing tolerance levels to pollutants. The species we collect tells us about the long term health of our water and helps us address water quality concerns.

The data collected can be found at: micorps.net/about-data-exchange.

Healthy Water Week

Healthy Water Week is a week-long open house for participants to learn about water health. Participants learned about how they contribute to water health and common water contaminants. Staff performed free water screenings for two of these water contaminants.

Connecting with Lake Residents

Partnering with the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership, we create and share educational materials. These materials are shared with lake users and those who live on lakes. The publications give tools needed to keep lakes healthy and clean. Contact us if you are interested in learning more about these resources.



Top image: Two Rivers Coalition board member Dan Burton and Strike Team Coordinator Abigale Bristol in the Black River collecting macroinvertebrates (October 2023)

Bottom image: CISMA Coordinator Alex Florian, with volunteers, collecting macroinvertebrates in Eastman Creek (May 2023)

CISMA Coordinator Alex Florian in Paw Paw during the Maple Lake Landing Blitz (July 2023)

Landing Blitz

The SWxSW Corner CISMA held a Landing Blitz event at the Maple Lake Boat Launch in Paw Paw. Invasive species are often spread between lakes by hitchhiking on watercraft. During the event, lake users learned how to properly clean their watercraft.

These park improvements are made possible in part by a contribution from Coca-Cola

HELP STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS



Female red-winged blackbird (June 2023)

WILDLIFE

CISMA Coordinator Alex Florian and Strike Team Coordinator Abigale Bristol with their Clean, Drain, Dry billboard in Mattawan (June 2023)

Outreach and Education

Our community is our greatest tool when addressing invasive species. It is through outreach and education that the CISMA Team is able to reach more people to identify, prevent, and manage invasive species. Together in this work, we reduce invasive species' impacts on our environment, public health, and economy. The more people that know about invasive species, the more eyes there are on the ground to identify them. More than 375,762 people were educated about invasive species in the tri-county area in 2023.



CISMA Coordinator Alex Florian removing the invasive aquatic plant parrot feather (December 2022)



SWxSW Corner CISMA

What is a CISMA?

The SWxSW Corner CISMA is a Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area. The Van Buren Conservation District mobilizes a team that works to help anyone in Berrien, Cass, or Van Buren Counties to understand, prevent, and manage invasive species. Invasive species are non-native plants and animals that cause harm to our environment, human health, and economy.

Our local CISMA Team oversees the identification, education, and treatment of invasive species in its service area. This was the third year of the CISMA's Strike Team led by Strike Team Coordinator Abigale Bristol. The Strike Team focuses on surveying and managing invasive species. The team joins CISMA Coordinator Alex Florian who works in programs, education, and outreach.



Hike/Paddle with a Naturalist

Our Hike and Paddle with a Naturalist events provide education through hands-on experience. Whether on kayaks or on hikes, the public learns about and engages with the environment. A naturalist is there to answer questions and lead the activity. Connecting the community and their environment provides valuable education and appreciation.



Strike Team

The SWxSW Corner CISMA Strike Team completed its third year of invasive species survey and management. In the tri-county area, the team surveyed for spotted lanternfly. The team was contracted by the Van Buren County Road Commission to survey and treat the invasive plants, Phragmites and Japanese knotweed, along county road rights-of-way. The team was also contracted by land conservancies and private landowners to conduct treatment in high-quality habitats throughout the service area.

Strike Team Coordinator Abigale Bristol and Strike Team Crew Jena Johnson treating the invasive plant kudzu in South Haven (July 2023)

Invasive Species Priority List

These are some of the highlighted invasive species to be on the lookout for in Van Buren County.

- Asian long-horned beetle
- Black & pale swallow wort
- Chinese yam
- European frogbit
- Flowering rush
- Hemlock wooly adelgid
- Japanese knotweed
- Japanese stiltgrass
- Kudzu
- Phragmites
- Spotted lanternfly
- Oak wilt

For photos, descriptions, and treatment methods visit misin.msu.edu or contact the SWxSW Corner CISMA Coordinator at 269-633-9044 or email InvasivesEd@VanBurenCD.org

Summer Education

For the second year, we held our summer education program. In partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, we held the program at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery. Elementary school children have fun learning about natural resources during summer break with hands-on experience.



Top image: Water Quality Project Manager Erin Fuller during Hike with a Naturalist at Ross Coastal Plain Marsh Preserve in Covert (August 2023)

Bottom image: Conservation Associate Carlie Southland teaching students about insects during summer education at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery (August 2023)





Staff and volunteers braving the rain during the Paw Paw Recycle Roundup Collection (June 2023)

RESOURCE RECOVERY & RECYCLING

The VBCD operates Van Buren County's recycling program - the Resource Recovery Program. For 12 years, we have offered recycling and responsible disposal of hard-to-dispose items. Through the program, waste is diverted from landfills and as a result, the environment is protected from hazardous materials. The program includes 12 collection days and 2 year-round collection sites, and it covers 9 categories of service.

This year, we added two new categories of service and expanded other services. Partnering with local libraries, we started a year-round battery recycling program. We added foam (Styrofoam™/polystyrene) recycling to our Recycle Roundup collections as well. With Senior Services of Van Buren County, we added a year-round electronics recycling site in South Haven.

Recycling & Materials Management Coordinator Kalli Marshall also revamped the Recycle Guide and works to expand recycling opportunities for our community. Program funding provided by the VBCD Operations millage; Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy grants; Van Buren County; and local municipalities.

Passenger & Semi Tires:
11,229 tires recycled

*Covert Tire & Electronics Collection
(June 2023)*



Large Tires:
50.8 tons of large equipment and tractor tires

*Paw Paw Large Tire Collection
(July 2023)*

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW), Paint, & Other Chemicals:
24,580 pounds of HHW and 15,658 pounds of paint responsibly disposed of

*Paw Paw Recycle Roundup
(June 2023)*



Batteries:
1,033 pounds of batteries from
battery recycling sites

*South Haven Recycle Roundup
(August 2023)*



Mixed Paper & Cardboard:
57,440 pounds of mixed paper
44,860 pound of cardboard
recycled

Cardboard Recycling Hopper



Confidential Paper Shredding:
9,000 pounds of paper
shredded and recycled

*South Haven Recycle Roundup
(August 2023)*



Pesticide Containers:
475 containers recycled

Pesticide containers

Electronics:
87,388 pounds of electronics
between one day
collection events and our
year-round collection sites

*Covert Tire & Electronics Collection
(June 2023)*



Foam (Styrofoam™/polystyrene):
985 pounds recycled

*South Haven Recycle Roundup
(August 2023)*





OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Administrative Associate Lia Will helping children through the Farm Bureau Kids Adventure course during the Van Buren Youth Fair in Hartford (July 2023)



Food, Farm & Fun Guide

The VBCD promotes our local economy, food system, and recreation through the Van Buren County Food, Farm, & Fun Guide (the Guide). The Guide had 7,000 paper copies distributed and had thousands of online views. This year, we introduced our online interactive local food map.

View the Guide and other local food and recreation resources at VanBurenCD.org/food-farm-fun/

VBCD Library

We maintain a community library on a variety of natural resource topics. These publications are available for county residents and landowners to borrow.

Backyard Symposium

Our Backyard Symposium webinar series connects viewers to natural resource topics. Special speakers bring their expertise on a variety of topics. For our third year of Backyard Symposium, speakers discussed plant identification, soil, outdoor recreation, and forest management.

Backyard Symposium videos are on our YouTube channel at www.YouTube.com/c/VanBurenCD.



Mike Bozung, from Straight Line Red Angus, receiving 2022 Farmer of the Year with Senior MAEAP Specialist Kyle Mead during the VBCD Annual Meeting at Michigan Flywheelers Museum (July 2023)

Annual Meeting

We held our Annual Meeting, Director Election, and Picnic at the Michigan Flywheelers Museum's historic Stephenson Barn. VBCD staff gave updates on programs and services. Attendees enjoyed dinner, music, and mingling. Tim Kling was awarded the 2022 Conservationist of the Year. Tim was recognized for his advocacy for recycling and great impacts on the recycling program. Mike and Casey Bozung of Straight Line Red Angus were awarded Farmer of the Year. The Bozungs were recognized for their contributions to the community and commitment to sustainability.



Youth Outreach & Education

The VBCD engages with youth about natural resource conservation and its importance. Staff presented during career days, participated in science class events, and more. By interacting with youth, we empower the next generation of stewards and conservationists.

Senior Conservation Specialist Colleen Forestieri demonstrating cover crops to Van Buren Tech students (April 2023)



Presentations

District staff provide educational presentations whenever possible. We provided presentations to the public on a variety of natural resource topics. Some topics included sustainability, invasive species, and more!

Conservation Technician Lucas Hartman giving a forestry demonstration to Paw Paw Middle School students (April 2023)

Media

Conservation is a community effort, which is why we make an effort to reach as many of you as we can. We use both traditional and digital media to stay connected to you. We write monthly articles in four local newspapers. Conservation Technician Gabriel Francisco writes articles for Farmers Exchange on pasture plants. Stay connected with us by visiting our website and following us on social media!

VanBurenCD.org

[vbcdmi](https://www.instagram.com/vbcdmi)

[Van Buren Conservation District](https://www.linkedin.com/company/van-buren-conservation-district)

[VanBurenCD](https://www.youtube.com/VanBurenCD)



Red-tailed hawk, Geneva Township (July 2023)

