



Highlight

The water quality team collects water samples every month. In collaboration with the University of Notre Dame, this information is used to research the effectiveness of conservation practices on farm fields. Some months the work is harder than others - for this month's sampling, Colleen Forestieri got to snowshoe through about a foot of freshly fallen snow for nearly two miles!

Stacking BMPs to Mitigate Ag Runoff in the Paw Paw River Pine/Mill/Mud 2 319 Project (EGLE 319 Grant)

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Water sampling 12/2/25
2. Farming for the Future conference planning 12/16/25
3. Small Grower meeting 12/10/25
4. Farmer meetings
5. Troubleshoot water level sensors
6. Post-harvest cover crop coordination

Upcoming Activities

1. Water sampling 1/8/26
2. Farming for the Future conference planning 1/6/26
3. Meeting with Xylem, Inc re water level sensors 1/8/26
4. Farmer recruitment
5. Prepare for 2026 outreach

GLRI - Connecting lake associations with their upstream watersheds in southwest Michigan

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Partner meetings

Upcoming Activities

1. Outreach to landowners



Van Buren Conservation District
December 2025 Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects Board Report
Prepared January 2026
Staff: Colleen Forestieri Erin Fuller

- 2. Prepare for planting next year
- 3. Reporting

MDARD/MSU Climate Resilience Project

- Upcoming Activities
- 1. Sign contract

Other

- 1. Weekly staff meetings
- 2. Develop social media posts
- 3. Grant tracking
- 4. Water quality team meeting 12/2/25
- 5. Review new grant opportunities
- 6. Reviewed Annual Report

- Upcoming Activities
- 1. Weekly staff meetings
 - 2. Develop social media posts
 - 3. Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership meeting 1/8/26
 - 4. Kellogg Biological Station Long-Term Agroecosystem Research meeting 1/16/26
 - 5. Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) farmer panel planning 1/20/26
 - 6. Meeting with Kosciusko County SWCD 1/21/26
 - 7. Grant writing
 - 8. Grant tracking
 - 9. Quarterly reporting

- New Grant Proposals Submitted
- 1. EGLE FY26 Watershed Council Grant submitted 12/10/25



Van Buren Conservation District
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Staff: Colleen Forestieri Erin Fuller

Photo



Colleen Forestieri of the Van Buren Conservation District and students from the University of Notre Dame snowshoe to collect water samples at a field site in Hartford, MI.



SWxSW Corner Cisma

December 2025 Board Report

Prepared January 2026

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

Highlights

Though our team fully enjoyed their holidays, December was packed with reflection and planning. We met with several partners to discuss possible future projects funded through grants and for-hire contracts. We shared with our partners the great work we accomplished in 2025, as well as joined them in the field to get good work done in the cold season. We began looking toward 2026, drafting survey locations and management areas. The Land Management Project Manager has taken another position elsewhere, so the team began the process of transitioning her projects to the Team.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Met with Contractor "Dune Restoration Services" about best practices for invasive species management.
2. Planned for the Cisma annual meeting
3. Began work on transitioning for staff turnover
4. Met with Village of Grand Beach and Chikaming Open Lands to discuss partnership opportunities
5. Met with The Nature Conservancy to discuss partnership opportunities
6. Drafted the final report for 2025 Van Buren County Road Commission invasive species survey and treatment
7. Updated financial tracking for 2025 reflection and 2026 planning
8. Drafted target survey locations for upcoming 293.T surveys (kudzu, stiltgrass, and cinnamon vine)
9. Began draft for 293.73 interim report
10. Began contract work with Chikaming Open Lands managing invasive species alongside their crew on their properties

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. MSUe Facilitated Meeting Workshop
2. 2025 HWA Crew Celebration & Partner Update

Upcoming Activities

1. Cisma Steering Committee meeting | Monday January 26 at 9:30 AM



SWxSW Corner Cisma

December 2025 Board Report

Prepared January 2026

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

2. Cisma Annual Meeting | Wednesday February 11 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM | 490 S Paw Paw St, Lawrence, MI 49064
3. The Stewardship Network Conference | all day Thursday and Friday Jan 22th-23rd | 219 S Harrison Rd, East Lansing, MI 48824

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. Michigan Sea Grant | [Environmental Internship Program](#) | \$5000 project cost | expected decision date March 2026

Species of the Month: Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Hemlocks are an important evergreen tree in Michigan. Their thick, drooping branches provide shade to our cold water streams. This keeps them cool for cold-water fish like salmon and trout. They also provide cover from the snow, making them a favorite spot for deer in the winter. Unfortunately Michigan's hemlocks are threatened by an invasive insect called hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). This pest has already killed a large percentage of hemlock forests in the Appalachian Mountains and could do the same here.

You can help prevent the spread of HWA and keep Michigan's forests healthy by following these tips:

- Burn firewood where you buy or cut it. Moving firewood can spread if the insect is hitchhiking on the logs.
- Avoid walking near hemlock trees because HWA can hitchhike on your clothes to new places. They are only the size of a pepper grain so you may not see them!
- Brush off your boots after every outing to prevent the spread of invasive species.



The tiny insect latches onto the base of hemlock needles and feeds on the sugars that the plant has stored there. This can kill a tree in only a few years. Once the insect beds down on a needle, it forms a thick, white, woolly coat. This coat is about the size of a grain of rice, which gives the adelgid its name. Fluffy white HWA can be found on the base of underside of needles of hemlock trees throughout the winter.





Van Buren Conservation District
January 2026 CTAP Board Report
Conservation Technical Assistance Program:
MAEAP and Regenerative Agriculture Programs
Prepared: 12/19/2025
Staff: Kyle Mead



Highlights

The technician has been busy reaching out to and visiting with producers about Verification and assessments as well as making connections with NRCS. He has also helped several producers gain access to the new WUR sight and report the water use.

Activities and Meetings/Trainings

1. 12/8 - MACD Conference
2. 12/9+10 - GLEXPO
3. 12/17 - 4 Farm Assessments - Lawton
4. 12/18 - Farmer visit in office, referral to NRCS

Goal /Progress Tracking

Program Outputs	Goal for the Year:	Completed Year to Date:	Percentage Completed Year to Date:
Risk Assessments:	70	12	17%
Risk Reductions:	120	23	19%
New Verifications:	12	0	0%
Reverifications:	17	0	0%
Soil Health Assessments:	18	0	0%
Soil Health Tests:	12	0	0%
Soil Health Management Plans:	4	0	0%
Farm or Site Visits:	100	40	40%



Van Buren Conservation District
January 2026 CTAP Board Report
Conservation Technical Assistance Program:
MAEAP and Regenerative Agriculture Programs
Prepared: 12/19/2025
Staff: Kyle Mead





Barry Conservation District
 1611 S. Hanover, Suite 105,
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barrycd.org

January 5th, 2026

To the Barry, Allegan, and Ottawa Conservation District Boards of Directors:

I am writing to document the accomplishments of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development’s Forestry Assistance Program (FAP) for the 9 county service area of: Barry, Allegan Ottawa, Eaton, Ionia, Kent, Van Buren, Calhoun, and Kalamazoo counties. FAP has 6 primary deliverables as stated in the grant agreement, which are as follows: Site visits, QFP enrollment, referrals to local professionals and public agencies, media occurrences, outreach events, and MAEAP FWH Verifications.

Over the past month in the FAP grant service area, our contributions include:

Deliverable Item	November 2025	December 2025
Total Individual Consultations (Site Visits, etc.)	5	3
QFP Enrollment in Acres	0	0
Total Referrals to Public (MAEAP, etc.) or Private Sector	8	5
Media Occurrences	3	3
Outreach Events Conducted/Presented	0	0

Total Outreach Event Attendance	0	0
Any Narratives (Highlights, Impacts, Successes, or Details you'd like to share.)	<p>Meeting with new service area counties in the next month to determine needs and strategies to reach new clients.</p> <p>I will be reaching out to see when would be good to meet each new district's board of directors.</p> <p>MPFC Annual Conference, "Burning Issues" is currently being polished up and will be ready at Fort Custer this February.</p>	<p>Met with most of the new counties for a presentation on QFP as well as an overview of my program and goals. For the year.</p> <p>Working on getting lists of eligible parcels for QFP in the 6 new counties for mailers in the next month.</p> <p>Finished up all tree farm inspections before the 2026 Tree Farm audit.</p>
What do you need increased support with?	Looking forward to meeting with all of you for determining the best strategies to move towards program goals.	Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

A slow month for metrics, but what a huge turnout of support for our individual meetings with our new districts. I feel extremely optimistic for the future of this program, both in regards to the exciting new things we can do with all of our partners, as well as the progress we are making towards reaching our goals for the year. Each one of you has been very supportive on trying to increase our QFP numbers and I think that will make the difference this year. If district staff of district boards need any further explanation of what I do and what our goals are, please feel free to reach out to me. Wishing you a Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Benjamin Savoie, CF
District Forester



Van Buren Conservation District
December 2025 National Association of
Conservation Districts (NACD) Technical
Assistance & Outreach Board Report
Prepared January 2026
Staff: Lucas Hartman Gabriel Francisco



Highlights

December was a busy month for both technicians. Gabriel presented at the MACD Annual Fall Conference, and Lucas attended the annual GLEXPO event and both represented the VBCD in excellent fashion. December was also a busy month of collecting the 2026 EQIP & CSP applications which has a cut off of Jan. 15, 2026 for those interested in applying towards the first round of funding. We have had many interested landowners reach out representing all aspects of Van Buren County agriculture, and dealing with all types of resource concerns. There is no doubt that Van Buren County is a diverse and dynamic county with so many fantastic agricultural outlets!

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Gabe's monthly totals
 - a. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) applications / plans assisted
13
 - b. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications / plans assisted
1
 - c. Existing EQIP contracts serviced
3
 - d. Existing CSP contracts serviced
0
2. Lucas' monthly totals
 - a. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) applications / plans assisted
10
 - b. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications / plans assisted
4
 - c. Existing EQIP contracts serviced
9
 - d. Existing CSP contracts serviced
11

Meetings/Trainings Attended

- 12/01/2025 - Van Buren Youth Fair Board Meeting
- 12/03/2025 - CSP Planning Meeting with Landowner
- 12/03/2025 - Forestry Assistance 2026 meeting with Ben Savoie, District forester
- 12/04/2025 - EQIP farm Visit, Bangor



Van Buren Conservation District
 December 2025 National Association of
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- 12/05/2025 – Conservation Planner training through NACD; Application submitted
- 12/08/2025 – EQIP application meeting, Paw Paw office
- 12/08/2025 – Farm Visit – Paw Paw – Brush Management, Pasture, Livestock and Fencing
- 12/08/2025 – 12/10/2025 – MACD Conference – Belleaire Michigan
- 12/09/2025 – 12/11/2025 – GLEXPO – Grand Rapids Michigan
- 12/11/2025 – NRC Meeting in Lansing
- 12/15/2025 – CMNP Training with AnneMarie of Allegan NRCS
- 12/16/2025 – Farming for the Future Planning Meeting
- 12/16/2025 – Office Holiday Party
- 12/18/2025 – Farm Visit – Bangor – Certification of Brush Management
- 12/29/2025 – Office Visit – Certification of CMNP and Prescribed Grazing

Grant Deliverables Tracking (January 2025 – December 2025)

Predicted Accomplishments	Fiscal Year Progress to Date
30 Contracts Obligated	16/30
70 Practices/enhancements certified (implemented)	27/75
50 Plans Assisted	95/90
Farmer-to-Farmer meetings / Educational Events / Presentations / Workshops	9/9
1,100 Acres with Improved Management	1328.3/1,100
1,350 Acres with Practices Implemented	1109.7/1,350
135 Clients Reached	185/135
60 New Producers Reached	80/60
35 Historically Underserved Producers Reached	53/35
275 Participants at Educational Presentations	322/275



Van Buren Conservation District
December 2025 National Association of
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3 New Coalitions or Partnerships	1/3
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Upcoming Activities

- 01/15/2026 – USDA Conservation Program Application Deadline
- 03/11/2026 - Farming for the Future
- 04/10/2026 - 4/11/2026 - VBCD Annual Tree Sale

Photos



Conservation Technician Gabriel Francisco presenting at the annual MACD Fall Conference.



Van Buren Conservation District
December 2025 Outreach Board Report
Prepared 12/31/2025
Staff: **Jacob Diljak**

Highlights

Outreach is working on three big projects: the 2025 Annual Report; the Food, Farm, and Fun Guide; and Tree Sale. Shop affordable, quality seedlings and support local conservation efforts! VanBurenCD.org/shop

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Public relations: making connections between the public, conservation, and the VBCD
2. Public outreach: online, digital, and in-person communications with the public
3. Organizational support: support of coworkers and VBCD in events, programs, and services
4. Graphic design: creation, collaboration, and dissemination of materials
5. Media and communication: photography, materials, and content creation and dissemination
6. Tree Sale: promotion, sale organization and management
7. 2026 Annual Report: design, printing, coordination and deliveries
8. Food, Farm, & Fun Guide: advertiser work, drafting, design, photography, coordination
9. Farming for the Future: promotion and event coordination
10. Discover with the District: Winter Wildlife: promotion and event coordination
11. SWxSW Corner CISMA Annual Meeting: promotion and event coordination
12. Resource Recovery Program: program support, design and content review, planning
13. VBCD website: updates and edits
14. Survey: drafting, research, collaboration

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. Staff meetings (12/2, 12/16, 12/23)
2. Admin team meetings
3. Outreach 1:1 (12/5, 12/12, 12/16, 12/19, 12/23, 12/29)
4. 2026 Resource Recovery Media Planning (12/1)
5. Conservation Corner Planning (12/2)
6. Millage Information Planning (12/2)
7. Planning Meeting: 2/2 Discover with the District (12/2)
8. Michigan Association of Conservation District Annual Conference (12/8-10) **pictured**
9. Birds and Blooms Planning Meeting (12/12)
10. CISMA Team Branding Collaboration (12/17)
11. Tree Sale Shop Inputs (12/18, 12/22)
12. Tree Sale Shop Check-in (12/31)
13. Resource Recovery January Outreach Review (12/31)



New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. NA

Upcoming Activities

1. Two Rivers Coalition Meeting (12/20)

	Trends	Content	Audience
Website	-	1 News Posts	1,187 Visitors
Facebook	4,782 People Reached	28 Posts	3,210 Page Followers (12 ↑)
Instagram	242 People Reached	15 Posts	394 Followers (9 ↑)
LinkedIn	28 Impressions	0 Posts	75 Followers (0 ↑)
YouTube	Total Views	-	1,288 Subscribers (8 ↑)
TikTok	1 Likes	0 Posts	86 Followers (0 ↑)394

Event Category	Number of Events	Impressions
Miscellaneous	1	50
VBCD Events	0	0
Farmers Markets	0	0



Van Buren Conservation District
December 2025 Outreach Board Report
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Staff: **Jacob Diljak**



Executive Director Emily and Conservation Technician Gabe at the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) Annual Conference. Collaborating with other conservation districts, we bring back resources, connections, and ideas to our County and public.



Conservation Technician Gabe Francisco presenting about the work we are doing in Van Buren County at the MACD Annual Conference.



Van Buren Conservation District
December 2025 Resource Recovery Board Report
Prepared January 2026
Staff: Kalli Marshall



Highlights

Excited things happened as we wrapped up 2025! We were able to assist five of our local Waste and Recycling Centers implement recycling of foam into their services. Additionally, Kalli was able to attend and participate in the MSUE Facilitated Leadership Training in Bay City, MI near the start of the month. That training will help us to lead better meetings in the future.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Responded to residents who had recycling questions with options for disposal/recycling
2. Scheduled social media posts for December 2025
3. Read resource recovery updates from Michigan Recycling Coalition, The Recycling Partnership, and EGLE to keep informed of trends and changes
4. Tracked electronics collection for December 2025
5. Connected with regional and county partners for Materials Management Planning
6. Worked with waste haulers and materials recovery facilities for detailed education
7. Refreshed Battery Recycling Stations at local libraries
8. Connected with partner counties to plan with 2026 Recycling Infrastructure Grants
9. Processed and submitted 2025 Scrap Tire invoices
10. Strategized 2026 community engagement and education events
11. Prepped materials for the 2026 collection season
12. Assisted team with vehicle maintenance
13. Supplied transfer stations with supplies and signs to begin Foam collection
14. Assisted in reorganization of office supplies

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 12/1/2025 - 2026 Resource Recovery Outreach planning
2. 12/2/2025 - Resource Recovery Team Meeting
3. 12/2-4/2025 - Michigan State University Extension Facilitated Meeting Workshop
4. 12/9/2025, 12/17/2025 - VBCD Staff Meeting
5. 12/11/2025 - Columbia Township Infrastructure Grant Discussion
6. 12/12/2025 - USDA Solid Waste Grant with Michigan Sustainable Business Forum Discussion
7. 12/15/2025 - Southwest Michigan Materials Management Planning Meeting
8. 12/23/2025 - Outreach Team Meeting
9. 12/31/2025 - January Resource Recovery Outreach review



Van Buren Conservation District

December 2025 Resource Recovery Board Report

Prepared January 2026

Staff: Kalli Marshall

Materials Management Planning

- The committee appointed official members to the Materials Management Plan working groups. Additionally, new meeting dates were scheduled for 2026 to adjust meetings for the first Wednesdays of the month. We continue to refine our recycling and organics goals for the final MMP. We currently have a recycling survey open through January and hope for as much participation as possible.