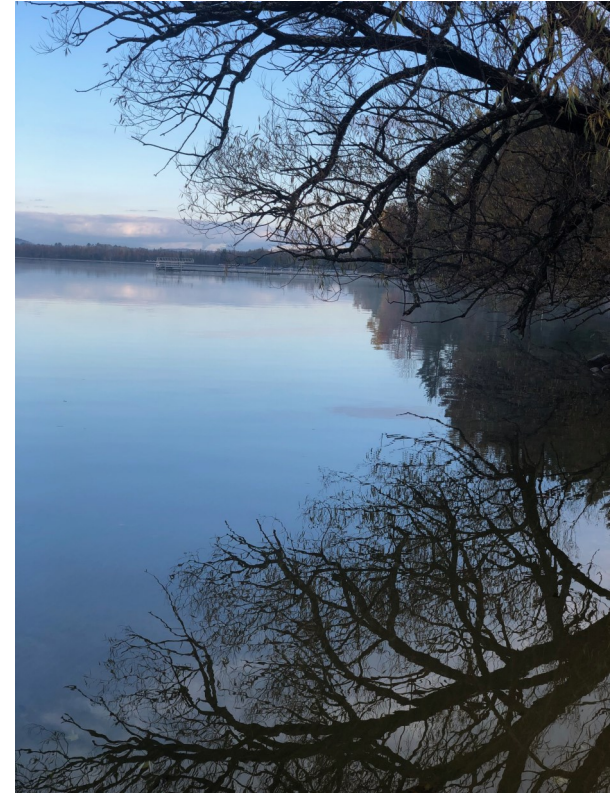




Berrien County Conservation District

“Preserving & Protecting Our Natural Resources”



Berrien County Conservation District
3334 Edgewood Road, Berrien Springs, MI 49103
Phone: 269-471-9111 x3
Website: www.berriencd.org
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All Berrien County Conservation District programs and services prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital or family status, political belief, sexual orientation or disability. Berrien County Conservation District partners with NRCS USDA. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

2023 Annual Report

Annual Meeting Date: 02/29/2024



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We would like to offer a very special thank you to: The Berrien County Board of Commissioners for the Appropriation for general operating expenses approved as continued financial support to the Conservation District, and the Commissioners interest in preserving Berrien County's Natural Resources, and support for our local farming community.

The Berrien County Conservation District sincerely thanks all of those who have ever partnered with us, supported us through donations, letters, suggestions, and volunteered with their time and energy to help us accomplish our mission of preserving and protecting Berrien County's natural resources through education, management, and technical assistance.

Thank you to our silent auction donors!

**Anonymous Friend of the Conservation District
Ausra Equipment and Supply
Berrien County Conservation District
Bette Pierman
Brandy Wise-Tenter
Clear Water Meats
DeGroot Inc.
Eau Claire Fruit Exchange
GreenMark Equipment
Kathy Wise
Kaminski Farms Meats
Kristen Albers - Mary Kay Consultant
L'BRI Skin Care and Blessed Bouquets Basket –Emily Dussel
Lehman's Brewery and Farmhouse
Lemon Creek Winery
Love Creek County Park & Nature Center/ BC Parks Comm.
Nardo's Pizza
Robson's Country Store
Safety Psychographics
Sassafras Acres**

Thank you!

*Invasive Species Cisma Partnership
 “Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area”*



Outreach and Education

In 2023 Our Cisma Coordinator, Alex Florian, engaged our community using social media, mailings, and educational events to teach on how to identify and address invasive species. The SWxSW Corner Cisma also conducted site visits with private landowners to identify invasive species issues on their property and connect them with resources to treat those invasive species. Between events, social media posts, and other outreach the Cisma reached 376,762 people in 2023 in the tri-county coverage area.

Strike Team

The SWxSW Corner Cisma Strike Team, led by Abbie Bristol, spent its third year seeking and treating invasive species within the tri-county area. In 2023, the Strike Team serviced high-quality wetlands and defended infrastructure from damaging invasive plants like Phragmites and Japanese knotweed. Our specialists are always looking out for new invasive insects and plants like Spotted Lanternfly and Hydrilla. In Oronoko Charter Township, the Cisma Team discovered Michigan’s first infestation of Hydrilla, one of the worst aquatic invasive plants in the US.



If you have questions about invasive species, would like to schedule a survey, or are interested in an outreach presentation, contact Alex Florian, Cisma Coordinator, at invasivesed@vanburencd.org or, contact Berrien County Conservation District.

Be on the watch for this invader! Spotted Lanternfly



Adult



Nymphs

Agenda

Annual Meeting/Voting/Silent Auction Doors Open 5:30 pm

Dinner 6:00 pm

Introductions Brandy Wise-Tenter, Chair

District Recap/Update Nancy Carpenter, Manager

Other Updates, Reports, Programs

Soil & Sedimentation	James (JW) Magner, Soil Erosion Inspector
MAEAP	Lisa Kuntz, MAEAP Technician
Produce Safety Cisma Partner	Patrick Gordon, Produce Safety Technician
NRCS Partner	Alex Florian, Cisma Coordinator
	Mike Stickle, Soil Technician

Awards

Conservation Farm of the Year Award presented by Mike Stickle, NRCS Soil Technician

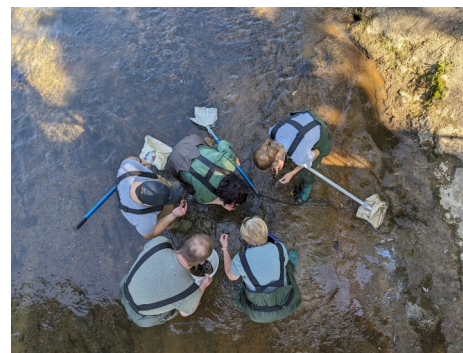
Environmental Stewardship/MAEAP Award presented by Lisa Kuntz, MAEAP Technician

Break

Special Guest Presentation “History of the Dustbowl” by the Gilmore Car Museum

Election Results Nancy Carpenter, Manager

Silent Auction Winners Brandy Wise-Tenter, Chair



Personnel

Conservation District Board of Directors

Brandy Wise-Tenter, Chair Jacob Milliken, Director
 Ryan Postema, Treasurer Bette Pierman, Director
 Kait Lemon, Director



Conservation District Staff

Nancy Carpenter, Manager
 Lisa Kuntz MAEAP Technician
 James Magner, Soil Erosion Inspector
 Patrick Gordon, Produce Safety Technician



Natural Resources Conservation Service Staff (NRCS)

Sherman Reed, District Conservationist
 Mike Stickle, Soil Conservation Technician



MAEAP cost-share was available to Berrien County producers in 2023 that are working to reduce environmental risks on the farm. A total of \$3,000 was available. Some of the items that were cost-shared were pesticide spill kits, well water testing soil sampling, manure sampling, rain gauges, flow meters, chemigation valves, drain seals and plugs, fire extinguishers, fuel pad liners. The participating farmers are actively working toward verifications



Berrien MAEAP Report FY 2023



Producers in Berrien county continue to be actively involved in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) by voluntarily reducing environmental risks to ground and surface water on their farms. A total of 63 risk assessments were completed on farms of all sizes in FY23. 19 local producers became environmentally verified through MAEAP with a total of 21 new verifications and 14 re-verifications (due every 5 years). Please congratulate these producers when you are out in the community for meeting these qualifications. They are as follows:

- New View Ag LLC** - (Terry & Jennie Koebel) - Galien, *Farmstead*
- Shiny Quarter Vineyard LLC** (Susan Chilton) - Buchanan, *Farmstead & Cropping*
- Blue Jay Farms** – (Art King) - Three Oaks, *Farmstead & Cropping*
- Round Barn** -(Matt Moersch) Baroda, *Cropping*
- Free Run Cellars** -(Matt Moersch) Berrien Springs, *Farmstead & Cropping*
- Domaine Berrien** (Katie Mauer) - Berrien Springs, *Farmstead & Cropping*
- Mick Klug Farms** (Abby Schilling) - St. Joseph, *Farmstead & Cropping*
- Poplar Lawn Farm** (Mike Schmaltz) - Baroda, *Farmstead & Cropping & Livestock*
- Mountain Rd Vineyard LLC** (John & Sara Braganini) - Coloma, *Farmstead & Cropping*
- Krauss Tree Farm** (Robert Krauss)– Galien, *Forest Wetland Habitat*
- Demaio Forest** (Daniel Demaio)– Benton Harbor, *Forest Wetland Habitat*
- Carden Farm** (Dylan & Elizabeth Carden)–Buchanan, *Farmstead & Cropping & Livestock*
- Gast Farm** (Dennis Gast)–St. Joseph, *Farmstead & Cropping*
- Parra Farm** (Maria Parra)–Eau Claire, *Cropping*
- Loveland Farm** (Alicia Barton Barlow)–Buchanan, *Farmstead & Cropping*
- Turner Ranch** (Dave and Jen Turner)–Buchanan, *Farmstead & Livestock*
- Blooms N Bees** (Paul Depaul)–Berrien Springs, *Farmstead & Cropping*
- Sunny Harvest Farms** (Kyle Froehlick)–Eau Claire, *Farmstead & Cropping*
- Muddy Boots Farms** (Sunshine Pierce)–Three Oaks, *Farmstead & Livestock*

This environmental assurance indicates that their farms are in conformance with state and federal regulations, Right-to-Farm GAAMPs, and that they are continuing to protect Michigan’s natural resources for future generations.

We are now offering well water screening through out the year. The community can print the form off our website and make an appointment to have their well water screened for Nitrates and Nitrites.

A Fruit Farm Field Day was held on September 13, 2023 at Lemon Creek Winery. We had 42 participants in attendance at this event. Funding was received from a grant from the Heart of Cook through the Berrien Community Foundation as well as the MAEAP Communications Grant through Michigan Farm Bureau. This field day focused on “Fruit Farming.” Speakers focused on practices that promote sustainable agriculture, water use reporting & irrigation, harvest time insect control and soil microbiome.



Outreach / Events

Workshops, booths, informational displays & educational events presented at or materials presented, or, other events assisted with in fiscal year 2023:

All Things Wellness in Hall Park Annual Meeting

Berrien County Youth Fair Booth

Berrien MAEAP Field Day

Great Lakes Fruit & Veg EXPO

Earth Day at Hall Park

Environmental Fridays

Farmland Preservation Workshop

Grower Produce Safety Training

Kalamazoo MAEAP Field Day

Local NRCS Work Group Meeting

Macroinvertebrate Collections X 2

MiCorps Conference

Monarch Festival

Native Plant Sale

Native Plant Workshop

NW Orchard & Vineyard Show

Stream Cleanup

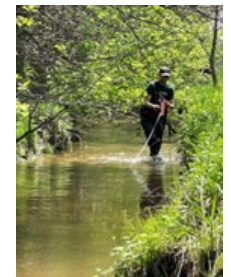
SWMI Horticulture Days

Tree and Shrub Reforestation Sale

ValleyHUB Summit

Viticulture Days

Well Water Screening



Accomplishments (does not include NRCS statistics)

MAEAP Program Environmental Outcomes	
Acres included in a nutrient plan or CNMP	775
Linear Feet of buffer/filter strips	6,232
Acres of cover crops	112
Acres of conservation tillage	208
Acres of no-till, zone till, or grass cover	478
Feet of livestock exclusion	932
Acres of Pest Management Plans	632
Sediment reduced, tons:	1,153
Phosphorus reduced, pounds:	1,847
Nitrogen reduced, pounds:	3,693
Well Water Sampling	
No. of samples screened for nitrites & nitrates	10
Produce Safety Program	
Farm visits	69
Produce Safety Risk Assessments	18
Implemented risk reduction practices	180
On-Farm Readiness Reviews	2
Published Newsletter articles	3
Hosted/assisted with educational event	4
Reforestation	
Number of customers	383
Trees and shrubs sold or donated	18,000
<i>Other fun stuff for the backyard grower</i>	
Asparagus plants	1,000
Strawberry plants	2,125
Fruit trees	390
Native Plants	
Number of Customers	108
Wildflowers and grasses sold	2,800
Dune grass sprigs sold	10,000
Stream Monitoring	
Macroinvertebrates collected	3,028
Habitat assessment sites	6
Stream Cleanup	
Estimated pounds of trash collected	500
Estimated pounds of recyclables col.	50
Number of tires collected	5

Michigan On-Farm Produce Safety



Our Produce Safety Technician provides many tools to help growers of SW Michigan. The focus of the program is to assess risks involved with the growing, handling, harvesting, storing, and transportation of fresh produce, covered by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule (PSR). All services offered are free, voluntary, and confidential. The primary goal is to assist area growers to reach or maintain compliance with tricky regulations and educate on best practices for preventing contamination of fresh produce. Our technician covers all of SW Michigan and is a part of the Michigan On-Farm Produce Safety Team. The team is a close working group that includes the six Produce Safety Technicians throughout the State, Michigan State University Extension, and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. This enables our produce safety technician to have access to abundant resources to assist our areas farmers in the most effective and complete way.

Last year our technician worked extensively to continue fostering relationships with local partners and worked closely with the ValleyHUB, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Michigan State Extension, and other agencies and organizations planning and facilitating multiple events catered to growers of SW Michigan. This has allowed us to reach an even greater audience, educate additional growers on the Produce Safety Rule, and work to ensure that produce reaching consumers is of great quality and safe to eat. Attendees were able to learn more about growing and supplying safer produce, what technicians can do for them, and schedule farm visits.

In fiscal year 2023, the Berrien County Conservation District Produce Safety Program was able to:



- Conduct 69 farm visits
- Complete 18 Produce Safety Risk Assessments
- Worked with farms to implement 180 risk reduction practices
- Conduct 2 On-Farm Readiness Reviews
- Publish 3 Newsletter articles
- Hosted or assisted with 4 educational outreach events

During 2024 our technician will continue participating as an expert in round tables and trainings for farmers at multiple events, writing and submitting articles for the Produce Safety Team newsletter, and working to create a larger footprint in the coverage area to assist a greater number of farmers in Southwest Michigan.

Summary of Conservation Plans, Contracts, & Practices Planned & Applied FY23

FY 2023 Conservation Program Funded Applications:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP 2018): **5**
 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP 2018): **3**
 Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WRE 2018): **0**
 Agriculture Land Easement Program (ALE 2018): **0**

FY 2023 Conservation Program funded Contract Agreements:

5- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP 2018) **160.0** acres at **\$93,756.00**
3-Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP 2018) **1137.4** acres at **\$166,881.00**

FY 2023 EQIP Certified Conservation Practices for Payment:

Practice	Planned Amount	Obligation Amount
Grazing Management Plan - Written-no.	1.00	\$2,896.50
Agrichemical Handling Facility-no.	2.00	\$73,513.92
Waste Facility Cover-no.	1.00	\$44,640.00
Heavy Use Area Protection-sqft.	800.00	\$3,536.00
Nutrient Management-ac.	812.90	\$12,546.83
Prescribed Grazing-ac.	68.50	\$1,874.85
Cover Crop-ac.	441.20	\$25,403.23
Waste Facility Cover-no.	1.00	\$99,164.16
Pest Management-ac.	703.80	\$29,279.27
Brush Management-ac.	90.10	\$13,242.28
Herbaceous Weed Control-ac.	5.20	\$620.88
Conservation Cover-ac.	5.20	\$3,164.30
Field Border-ac.	1.50	\$510.67
Tree/Shrub Site Preparation-ac.	21.30	\$1,545.74
Tree/Shrub Establishment-ac.	21.30	\$5,253.30
Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch Till-ac.	496.50	\$8,033.37
Totals	3,472.50	\$325,225.30

FY 2023 CSP Certified Annual Payments:

Practice	Planned Amount	Obligation Amount
Cropland Annual Payment-ac.	719.20	\$7,844.00
Establish Monarch butterfly habitat-ac.	15.00	\$26,933.10
Cover crop to minimize soil compaction-ac.	254.50	\$2,366.85
Reduced tillage to reduce water erosion-ac.	658.50	\$2,759.12
Existing Activity Payment-Land Use-ac.	1,552.60	\$11,508.00
Existing Activity Payment-Resource Concern-no.	31.00	\$14,400.00
Cons. cover for pollinators & beneficial insects-ac.	.20	\$64.57
Multiple crop types to benefit wildlife-ac.	.70	\$3.79
Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures & break pest cycles-ac.	1.60	\$15.17
Improved grazing management on pasture for plant productivity & health with monitoring activities-ac.	3.50	\$35.56
Reduced tillage to increase plant-available moisture-ac.	43.60	\$154.34
Improving nutrient uptake efficiency & reducing risk of nutrient losses-ac.	404.10	\$13,824.26
Total	3,684.50	\$79,908.76

Please see Sherman Reed, District Conservationist, for questions.

Accomplishments — continued

Critical Dune

Vegetation Assurance Written **1**

Hunting Access Program (HAP)

Number of acres under lease **1,866**
 Number of participating farms **5**

Education

In person: number of adults **890**

Outreach-media

Number of Newsletters/Email notices **13**
 Number of Facebook Reach **13,976**
 Number of Zoom broadcasts (global) **1**
 Number of Newspaper press releases **36**

Equipment (no-till drill)

Rental days (# days equip. was out) **11**

Volunteers

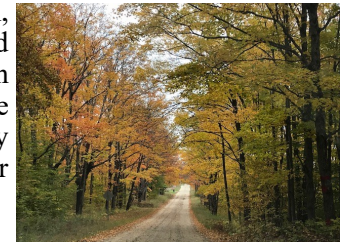
Number of hours people volunteered **605**

OTHER

Soil Erosion (as contracted for the Soil & Sedimentation Program through the Berrien County Drain Commissioner, statistics provided by BCDC)

Preliminary or Initial Visits to sites **329**
 Routine Inspections **372**
 Final Inspections, closing permit **544**
 Violation inspections **199**
 Follow Up Inspections, after violation **105**
 Unauthorized Activity checks **18**
 EGLE Request site visit **3**
 Total Site Inspections **1570**

CISMA Note: statistics include Berrien, Cass, & Van Buren county coverage area and are recorded in Van Buren Conservation District's annual report. Van Buren CD is the CISMA grant administrator. Berrien County Conservation District is a primary partner and steering committee member.



Funding

Grants received in or providing funding for Fiscal Year 2023:

- Berrien Community Foundation Heart of Cook Earth Day
- Berrien Community Foundation Heart of Cook Mini Grant
- Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDARD) for Operations
- MDARD for MAEAP
- MDARD for Produce Safety
- Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) for stream cleanup
- MiCorps for stream monitoring
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) for HAP
- MI Farm Bureau Communications Grant
- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

Charge for services providing funding in FY 2023:

- Contract with BC Drain Commission -Soil & Sedimentation
- Performing Vegetation Assurances in the Critical Dunes
- MAEAP Grant Administration
- Produce Safety Grant Administration

Fundraisers providing funding in FY2023:

- Reforestation
- Native Plants
- Plat Books, Other Materials

Appropriations providing funding in FY2023:

- Berrien County

Other funding sources:

- Equipment rentals
- Donations



BCCD Appropriations & Proposed Budget

Berrien County Conservation District Budget	FY 2023	Proposed FY 2024 Budget
REVENUE (By source type) <i>Do not list individual grants. Do not list Activity numbers. All Revenue must be in one of the following categories:</i>		
State Funds	\$ 211,003.47	\$ 212,161.50
Federal Funds	-	\$ 95,606.45
Contributions from Local Units	\$ 26,500.00	\$ 20,000.00
Charges for Services	\$ 58,567.48	\$ 59,281.00
Interest and Rentals	\$ 1,275.22	\$ 1,400.00
Reforestation, Native Plants, Retail Materials	\$ 63,915.69	\$ 62,000.00
Other Revenue	\$ 647.91	\$ 600.00
Donations	\$ 1,961.27	\$ 1,000.00
Total Revenue	\$ 363,871.04	\$ 452,048.95
	FY 2023	Proposed FY 2024 Budget
Expenditures (By Activity) <i>Use required activity numbers below and discretionary activity numbers for other activities. Include only those activities which apply to your District.</i>		
281 Operations	\$ 79,920.40	\$ 100,350.00
281 Critical Dune	\$ 24.76	\$ 1000.00
282 & 284 MAEAP	\$ 76,000.00	\$ 78,500.00
294 Reforestation, Native Plants, Retail Materials	\$ 40,272.84	\$ 41,000.00
297 Berrien Community Foundation	\$ 5,000.00	-
281 MiCorps Grants	\$ 7,898.83	\$ 1,981.50
296 Hunting Access Program	\$ 3,443.00	\$ 3500.00
540 Soil Erosion	\$ 31,964.86	\$ 31,000.00
542 Produce Safety	\$ 82,616.51	\$ 87,680.00
281 GLRI Grant	\$ 1,139.12	\$ 11,785.95
291 SOGL Grant	\$ -	\$ 74,259.86
Total Expenditures	\$ 328,280.32	\$ 431,057.31
Budget Balance	\$ 35,590.72	\$ 20,991.64
Beginning Fund Balance (Required)	\$ 119,482.00	\$ 155,072.72
Ending Fund Balance (Required)	\$ 155,072.72	\$ 176,064.36

Note: This is a revised budget and will be voted on at the regular March board meeting