

Berrien County Conservation District

“Preserving & Protecting Our Natural Resources”



Berrien County Conservation District
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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.

2022 Annual Report

Annual Meeting Date: 03/02/2023



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The following is a list of District Staff/Board Accomplishments/Statistics.
This does not include statistics from NRCS staff.

Trees and shrubs sold or donated	21,500
Tree sales Customers	434
Native Plants sold	2911
Native Plant Customers	124
Education: Number of adults	2182
Newsletters/Electronic notices of events via Email	10
Equipment rental days billed for (# days equip. was out)	18
No. hours people volunteered for district	326
Critical Dune Program; No. of VA's written	6
Dollars collected through VRA applications	\$1,500

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

<i>Grower Produce Safety Training X 4</i>	<i>Buchanan Plow Days</i>
<i>LEPC-Emergency Plan Presentation</i>	<i>SW Horticulture Days</i>
<i>Macroinvertebrate Collections X 2</i>	<i>CISMA Annual Meeting</i>
<i>Tree and Shrub Reforestation Sale</i>	<i>Native Plant Workshop & Sale</i>
<i>Kalamazoo CD MAEAP Field Day</i>	<i>Farming for the Future</i>
<i>Conservation Open House</i>	<i>Well Water Screening</i>
<i>Booth at Great Lakes Fruit & Veg EXPO</i>	<i>Forestry Field Day</i>
<i>Early Care & Education Grower Training</i>	<i>BCYF Booth</i>

Grants providing funding in FY2022:

- MDARD for Operations
- MDARD for MAEAP
- MDARD for Produce Safety
- MiCorps for stream monitoring
- MiCorps for stream cleanup (extended to 2023)
- MAEAP Communications Grant from MI Farm Bureau
- MDNR for HAP



Charge for services providing funding in FY2022:

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

Fundraisers providing funding in FY2022:

- Reforestation, Native Plants, Plat Books, Other Materials

Appropriations providing funding in FY2022:

- Berrien County
- Other funding source:
- Equipment rentals



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!

A.M. Leonard

Anonymous Friend of the Conservation District

Berrien County Conservation District

Brandy Wise-Tenter

Clear Water Meats

DeGroot Inc.

Eau Claire Fruit Exchange

Granor Farms, LLC

GreenMark Equipment

Lake Michigan Shore Wine Trail

Lancor's Kombuchade

Love Creek County Park & Nature Center/ BC Parks Comm.

Nardo's Pizza

National Grape Cooperative

Peat's Cider Social

Pokagon Band of Potawatomi

Robson's Country Store

Sarett Nature Center

Sassafras Acres



Agenda

Annual Meeting/Voting/Silent Auction	Doors Open 5pm
Dinner	6:00 pm
Introductions	Brandy Wise-Tenter, Chair
District Recap/Update	Nancy Carpenter, Manager
Other Updates, Reports, Programs	
MAEAP	Lisa Kuntz, MAEAP Technician
Produce Safety	Patrick Gordon, Produce Safety Technician
CISMA	Alex Florian, CISMA Coordinator
NRCS	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
Special Guest Speaker	<i>“Vegetables I have Known”</i> Benjamin Phillips Vegetable Specialist, Southwest Michigan Research & Extension Center
Election Results	
Silent Auction Winners	

Thank You!



Personnel

Conservation District Board of Directors

Brandy Wise-Tenter, Chair
Ryan Postema, Treasurer
Kait Lemon, Director

Terry Holloway, Director
Bette Pierman, Director

Conservation District Staff

Nancy Carpenter, Manager
Lisa Kuntz MAEAP Technician
James Magner, Soil Erosion Inspector
Patrick Gordon, Produce Safety Technician
Alex Florian (Shared) SW x SW Corner CISMA Invasive Species
Coordinator-housed at Van Buren CD see page 8

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Staff

Sherman Reed, District Conservationist
Mike Stickle, Soil Conservation Technician



Berrien County Conservation District Budget	End of FY22	Proposed FY 2023 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	\$ 186,857.41	\$ 207,736.07
Federal Funds	4000.00	\$ 4,000.00
Contributions from Local Units	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
Charges for Services	\$ 61,484.09	\$ 57,500.00
Interest and Rentals	\$ 1,438.90	\$ 1,500.00
Reforestation, Native Plants, Retail Materials	\$ 57,212.09	\$ 57,000.00
Other Revenue	\$ 5,943.98	\$ 80.00
Donations	\$ 553.38	\$ 500.00
Total Revenue	\$ 332,489.85	\$ 343,316.07
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>	End of FY22	Proposed FY 2023 Budget
281 Operations	\$ 76,634.91	\$ 77,000.00
281 Critical Dune	\$ 21.53	\$ 21.50
282 & 284 MAEAP	\$ 70,723.58	\$ 76,000.00
294 Reforestation, Native Plants, Retail Materials	\$ 40,818.16	\$ 41,000.00
297 Berrien Community Foundation	\$ 1,798.95	-
281 MiCorps Grants	\$ 3619.01	\$ 6,000.00
296 Hunting Access Program	\$ 3,188.17	\$ 3200.00
540 Soil Erosion	\$ 28,965.94	\$ 28,000.00
542 Produce Safety	\$ 72,633.77	\$ 83,600.00
Total Expenditures	\$ 298,404.02	\$ 314,821.50
Budget Balance	\$ 34,085.83	\$ 28,494.57
Beginning Fund Balance (Required)	\$ 85,396.17	\$ 119,482.00
Ending Fund Balance (Required)	\$ 119,482.00	\$ 147,976.57

* Note: End of fiscal year 2022 figures are final and post audit. Proposed budget figures for fiscal year 2023 are amended figures and will be voted on at the regular monthly board meeting 3/13/23.



Our Produce Safety Technician provides many tools to help growers of SW Michigan. The main focus 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. Growers can access services by contacting our technician directly, reaching out to their respective Conservation District, or through the Produce Safety Team website.

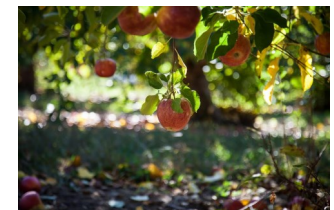
Proposed rule changes to the PSR agriculture water rule were announced by the FDA in December of 2021. The Produce Safety Team spent much of winter 2022 hosting meetings to inform farmers of these changes and compiling input from Michigan’s growers for submission to the FDA. Our technician also worked with growers individually to create constructive comments for submission to the FDA.

Final rulings on the changes to the agriculture water use requirements were announced later in 2022. The final ruling on traceability was also announced in November of 2022. Since the changes were made public, our Produce Safety Technician and the Michigan On-Farm Produce Safety Team have been working to inform growers on these changes to the PSR.

Last year our Technician worked extensively to foster relationships with local partners which allowed the program to reach a larger population of growers in SW Michigan. An example of these partnerships is the Kalamazoo Valley Community College ValleyHUB. Our Technician worked closely with the ValleyHUB, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Michigan State Extension, along with other organizations and agencies to plan and facilitate multiple events catering to growers of SW Michigan. This has allowed our Technician to reach an even greater audience, educating additional growers on the Produce Safety Rule. 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 2022, the Berrien County Conservation District Produce Safety Program was able to:

- Conduct 54 farm visits
- Complete 16 Produce Safety Risk Assessments
- Conduct 2 On-Farm Readiness Reviews
- Publish 3 Newsletter articles
- Hold or assist with 6 educational outreach events



During 2023 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.

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



Outreach and Education

Our Cisma Coordinator, Alex Florian, engages our community using social media, mailings, and educational events to teach on how to identify and address invasive species. The more people that know about invasive species, the more eyes there are on the ground to identify and report them.

In 2022, the Cisma held boat wash events at boat launches, and distributed educational materials to campgrounds and boat launches. They 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. This program was paid for by Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Environment Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD).

Strike Team

The SWxSW Cisma Strike Team, under Abbie Bristol, celebrated its second year of managing and treating invasive species within the tri-county management area. The Strike Team helps land conservancies and municipal departments to defend intact habitats and manage high priority invasive plants, like Japanese Stilt-grass and Kudzu, which were treated at no cost to landowners. The Cisma also surveyed for spotted lanternfly, an invasive insect that can cause failure of grape crops and other crops and has not yet been found in Berrien County or the rest of the Cisma’s service area.

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 your local conservation district.



*In Partnership with the Berrien County
Conservation District*

FY 2022 Conservation Program Applications:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP 2018): **12**
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP 2018): **2**
Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WRE 2018): **0**
Agriculture Land Easement Program (ALE 2018): **0**

FY 2022 Conservation Program funded Contract Agreements:

12- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP 2018) **1,396.6** acres at **\$622,163.89**
1- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP 2018) **407.2** acres at **\$90,575.00**

FY 2022 EQIP Certified Conservation Practices for Payment:

Agrichemical Handling Facility **1** at **\$67,160.00**
Herbaceous Weed treatment **6.2** acres at **\$980.13**
Conservation Cover **5.2** acres at **\$3,164.30**
Cover Crop **233.9** acres at **\$12,310.16**
Residue and Tillage Management Reduced Till **496.5** acres at **\$8,033.37**
Roofs and Covers **1** no. at **\$70,639.40**
Nutrient Management **496.5** acres at **\$3,589.70**
Pest Management Conservation Systems **496.5** acres at **\$15,634.78**

FY 2022 CSP Certified Annual Payments:

Existing Activity Payment-Land Use **404.1** acres at **\$3,031.00**
Existing Activity Payment –Resource Concern **13** no. at **\$3,900.00**

Pending Conservation Compliance Actions:

Identified Potential Wetland / Highly Erodible Land Violations: **10**
HEL and/or Wetland Determinations Logged: **69**

Contact Sherman Reed, District Conservationist, for questions.



Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program

Berrien MAEAP Report FY 2022



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 46 risk assessments were completed on farms of all sizes in FY22. Seven local producers became environmentally verified through MAEAP with a total of 3 new verifications and 4 re-verifications (due every 5 years):

Lancor Lane - (Ray and Marge Lancor) - Galien, *Cropping*
Ellis Family Farms (Rene Gelder) - Benton Harbor, *Cropping*
Morlock Girls LLC– Watervliet, *Farmstead & Cropping*
Granor Farms LLC - Three Oaks, *Farmstead & Cropping*
Lavender Field & Berry Farm - Berrien Springs, *Farmstead & Cropping*
Toadsettle Farm (Amy Gillan) - Bridgman, *Forest Wetland & Habitat*
Noel Farm (Barbara and Mark Landiak)– Berrien Springs, *Farmstead & Cropping*

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.

A well water screening event took place at the office in August. A total of 10 well owners participated in the event. The well water is screened for Nitrates and Nitrites. All but one of the samples tested within normal limits. We are now screening year round by appointment.

A Forestry Management Field Day was held on June 22, 2022 at Sarett Nature Center. We had 70 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 “Forest, Wetlands & Habitat.” Which is the newest category for MAEAP verification. It focuses on practices that promote sustainable forestry, wetlands, and non-forest habitat such as forest health, protecting air, water, and soil, and restoring habitat. Through the field day event we had guest speakers that answered some of the landowner’s questions on forest/timber management plans, invasive species identification and control, wetland restoration and management, and fish/wildlife habitat priorities.

MAEAP cost-share was available to Berrien County producers in 2022 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 (containing personal protective equipment, absorbent material, broom/dust pan, etc.), well water testing (Nitrates, Coliform, E. coli.), soil sampling, manure sampling, rain gauges, flow meters, chemigation valves, drain seals and plugs, fire extinguishers, fuel pad liners, and a lockable pesticide cabinet. The participating farmers are actively working toward verifications.

