



## Van Buren Conservation District August 2024 Program Update

*Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director*

**Grant Awarded:** The Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD) has been awarded a two-year \$568,618 grant from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) through their Nonpoint Source (NPS) Program. Over the next few years, the VBCD will promote a cost share program for farmers to implement conservation practices like cover crops, no-till and filter strips. Depending on the practice, location, and eligibility, up to 90% of the cost of installing conservation practices may be cost-shared. These practices benefit farmers and will help keep our waterways clean.

**Recycling Collections:** Details and tire sign-up available at:

<https://vanburencd.org/van-buren-county-recycling-collections/>. Please encourage folks to sign up their tires ahead of time! This year's final collection events are:

**-Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronics Collection** | September 9, 2024 | 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM | Columbia Township Transfer Station | 18868 52 1/2 Street | Grand Junction, MI 49056

**-Recycle Roundup Collection** | October 19, 2024 | 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Van Buren ISD Tech Center | 250 South Street | Lawrence, MI 49064 | Enter from South Street

**County-wide Invasive Species Treatment:** In partnership with the Van Buren County Road Commission, the SWxSW Corner CISMA Strike Team of the Van Buren Conservation District will be treating county road rights-of-way for invasive species. The Strike Team will be targeting invasive Phragmites and Japanese knotweed in county road rights-of-way. Invasive knotweed and Phragmites grow aggressively causing harm to road infrastructure, homes and buildings, and our environment. Treatment will begin the week of August 15, 2024 and will continue until the first hard frost of the season. For more information on invasive species or this treatment, please contact Strike Team Coordinator Abbie Bristol by emailing [InvasivesMGMT@VanBurenCD.org](mailto:InvasivesMGMT@VanBurenCD.org) or by calling 269-633-9058.

**Grant Opportunity with DNR:** DNR Parks and Recreation Division's Waterways Grant Program | Each year, local units of government and state colleges and universities are eligible to apply for grant assistance for recreational boating improvements and development at grant-in-aid harbors and boating access sites. The grant-in-aid program provides matching funding to help support quality recreational boating infrastructure. Communities are asked to match 50% of required funds. [Applications for the next round of waterways grant funding are due April 1, 2025.](#) Learn more about all DNR-administered grant programs at [Michigan.gov/DNRGrants](http://Michigan.gov/DNRGrants).

### **Program Updates:**

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - The Ag and Water Quality team assisted with Kids' Day at the Van Buren County Fairgrounds, as well as their auction. The team has also been busy preparing for and assisting with our 2024 Annual Meeting.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) - The CISMA Team spent July on land and in water, at private properties and community events. We are keeping the ball rolling with the creation of outreach materials and high-priority invasive species surveys and treatment while looking to our future. We are gearing up

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for the next phase in the treatment season and exploring opportunities to deepen collaboration with partners.

- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) – The specialist has been helping to cover Allegan County and Cass County with their tech vacancies. Allegan is in the process of hiring a new technician following Mike Ludlam’s retirement but Cass is holding off until Oct 1. In the meantime, several techs are dividing up those counties to help with high priority Re-verifications and easy New-verifications. The Van Buren specialist has exceeded his new verification goal for the year and is nearing his goal for re-verifications, where the extra effort in other counties has helped in reaching that goal.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCs) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) – Highlights in July include volunteering time at the Van Buren annual youth fair. Many of the families raising livestock for these events have had some kind of engagement with the VBCD and partnered USDA agencies. Local engagement like this helps the team strive towards USDA’s goal of “locally led conservation.”
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) – July is the height of the busy summer season – take a look at the photos (below) of staff working in water conservation, recycling, and more! Spread the word on our upcoming public events on the water! Learn more, and register, for the Paw Paw River Cleanup and Upper Jephtha Lake Paddle at [VanBurenCD.org](http://VanBurenCD.org)
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) – July was a busy month of events including Paw Paw Large Tire, Palisades Park Education, and VBCD Annual Meeting. Preparations for the next fiscal year began as well while we assessed the current programming and budget needs for continuation into the future.