



Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report



Blue Water Conservation District Board of Directors

Pictured from left to right: Greg Jarmolowicz, Vice Chairman; Greg Dorman, Chairman; Gene Burgess, Treasurer; Timothy Hale, Secretary; Jeff Reid, Associate Director; Charlie Lewis, Deputy Treasurer

The Wildlife Advantage

Wildlife Biology is a field that has many variables, there is no one true way to manage any property. This field is gifted with a thing called the “Umbrella Effect”. The Umbrella Effect is best described as the management for one species creating management for many species. In the region of Sanilac County, we best see this effect in the area of grasslands. The most common use of grasslands in management is for Ring-Necked Pheasant. Pheasants use the grassland as cover for nesting, thermal pockets in the winter, and food as they eat the seeds. Grassland management is crucial for pheasants to survive in the wild, but it is also beneficial for Deer, Turkeys, and a variety of threatened and endangered species. Grasslands are optimal bedding areas for deer throughout the whole year. Thick grasses provide thermal cover for warmth as well as a dense screen that makes it difficult for pheasants to be seen by predators. The grasslands also promote wildflowers and pollinator growth. By promoting pollinator grasslands butterfly’s, bees, and birds all benefit. Pollen and nectar for the bees and butterfly’s, and protein rich bugs for the birds which are essential for chick growth and preparation for migration. With so many species involved this means that we need to collaborate. By creating working groups of many different organizations and interests we can effectively manage for all species to benefit from these grasslands and therefore help everyone enjoy the outdoor community. For information about management and programs for your property contact Jacob Northuis at 810-648-2998 ext. 5 or jacob.northuis@mi.nacdnet.net



Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program

One of the environmental programs offered through the Blue Water Conservation District is the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). The mission of the MAEAP program is to work with farmers to identify all environmental concerns on their farm and correct those concerns with affordable solutions. Those solutions could include funding available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), watershed projects managed by the conservation district, or any grants administered by the conservation district. The goal of the MAEAP Program is to help every farmer meet or exceed the Michigan Right to Farm Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs). When a farm undergoes a review of their farming practices, and those practices meet the GAAMPs, that farm can be MAEAP verified. Currently, the Blue Water Conservation District (Sanilac and St. Clair County) has 190 verified systems (127 in Sanilac and 63 in St. Clair). This is a great indication of the commitment Sanilac and St. Clair County farmers have to protecting the environment. For more information on MAEAP and the MAEAP verification please contact the Blue Water Conservation District in Sandusky at (810) 648-2998 or in Kimball at (810) 984-3865.



C & G Farms is recognized by State Representative Dan Lauwers for achieving MAEAP verification.

A New Method of Conservation: Pay for Performance

The Blue Water Conservation District is heading into their third year of a 5-year agreement with The Nature Conservancy to help promote conservation in the Saginaw Bay Watershed. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded The Nature Conservancy with a \$2.5-million-dollar grant to reduce sediment in the Saginaw Bay Watershed. The Blue Water Conservation District was then chosen to be the one of the recipients of a sub-award. The grant is a “pay for performance” model and funding will be awarded depending on the amount of sediment reduced by implementing one or more conservation practices. Megan Naplin will be the technician working with this grant, it will include 4 sub watersheds within the Saginaw Bay Watershed; Saginaw River, Shiawassee River, Cass River, Pine and Chippewa Rivers. and it will cover areas in 17 Counties. Interested producers will be able to choose from 6 different conservation practices that will all impact sediment reduction in a positive way.

The project has enrolled close to 2500 acres across the watershed. Cover crops have been the largest success, but there have also been forage plantings and reduced tillage practices implemented as well! These conservation practices have helped keep nearly 500 tons of sediment out of the Saginaw Bay Watershed. The District had been busy promoting this program at the many agronomy and agricultural meetings that are held throughout the year. The District and The Nature Conservancy also worked together to hold a very successful Strip Tillage Demo Day this past fall. Thanks to the help of Richard D’Arcy for letting the District use his field and SKS Farms for providing the Demo of their strip tillage equipment. Strip tillage is a practice that is eligible through the Saginaw Bay Pay for Performance Program.

The Cass River Watershed is an eligible sub-watershed and producers that farm within this area are eligible for funding. Funding amounts will be determined by using the Great Lakes Watershed Management System to determine field specific scenarios to show how much sediment will be saved. Conservation practices such as no-till, reduced tillage, cover crops, and filters strips are available. Funding will not require multi-year contracts or any eligibility through the USDA. This grant will be available through 2020. Interested producers can contact the Blue Water Conservation District or Megan Naplin for more information.

Blue Water Conservation District: 810-648-2998

Megan Naplin: 810-824-6253

megan.naplin@macd.org



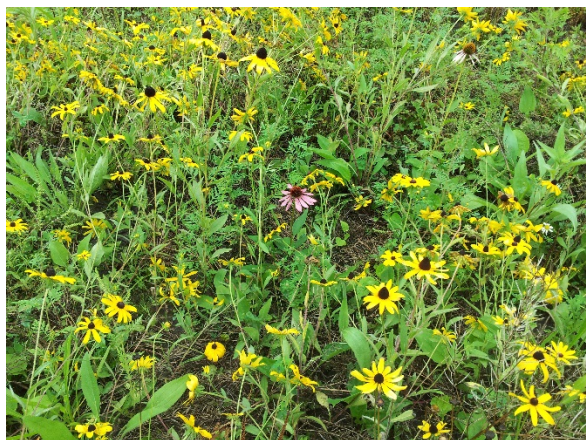
Blue Water Conservation District working with NRCS & MDARD

The Blue Water Conservation District (BWCD) in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) continues to provide environmental conservation assistance to landowners and agricultural producers of Sanilac, St. Clair & Macomb counties. Assistance is available for all sizes of agricultural, forestry and wildlife habitat improvement projects. If you would like to take steps to improve the health of our air, water, soil and natural environment, the BWCD can help to assist you with that goal.

The following photographs illustrate a few of the areas that BWCD can help you with:



“Cover Crops” – planted into corn (above left) and after harvest (above right) - help by improving soil health, reducing erosion, absorb/capture nutrients, increase crop yields, reduce diseases and more.....



Conservation “Pollinator” plantings (above left) provide bees, butterflies and other pollinators food and habitat. A High Tunnel System (above right) can extend the growing season by protecting vegetable plants health from colder temperatures.



Agrichemical Handling Facilities (above left) and Fueling Facilities (above right) – provide “secondary containment”, reducing the risk of farm fertilizers, pesticides & fuels from directly discharging into our environment.

If you would like to learn more about how the BWCD and NRCS can help to reduce the impact your farming operation(s) may have on the environment, improve the health of plants, soils & water, retain nutrients on your farm, or how to create a wildlife desired habitat - please contact the BWCD in Sandusky (Sanilac County) or Kimball (St. Clair & Macomb Counties). Financial assistance can be obtained by qualified individuals, entities and partnerships through the USDA-NRCS and provides reimbursement for some of the incurred expenses to implement most environmental improvement measures. Technical assistance is available to all desiring it – free of charge.

Wishing all Sanilac, St. Clair & Macomb County residents a healthy and happy 2018,

Mike Thompson
Blue Water Conservation District
CTAI Technician

New Additions to the Blue Water Conservation District

The Blue Water Conservation District is proud to announce that we have a new Wildlife Biologist Jacob Northuis. Jacob is from Grandville where he grew up with a passion for the outdoors. He is an avid hunter and fisherman who travels all over the state perfecting his craft. He graduated from Lake Superior State in 2016 with a Bachelor's Degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Management. He worked for two years for the DNR where his tasks ranged from habitat enhancement to wildlife disease monitoring. Jacob will be covering Sanilac, St. Clair, and Lapeer counties and is ready to help landowners improve wildlife habitat!

We are also excited to welcome Emily Crimmins to the Blue Water Conservation District as our new MAEAP Technician. Emily is from the Port Huron area and is thrilled to be back home helping her local producers. Emily is a recent graduate of Saint Mary's College in South Bend, Indiana where she graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Biology. Emily will be ready to assist local farmers through the MAEAP program and will also be doing reverifications for some producers.

The Blue Water Conservation District is happy to announce the retirement of Sandy Pritchett. Though her departure from the district will sadden us all, we are happy that she will enjoy some time to herself. Sandy may be retired from the district that doesn't mean she plans to slow down at all. She likes to stay involved in her community church.

The Blue Water Conservation District partners with Macomb County for the Green Macomb Initiative

The Green Macomb initiative was created by the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development after the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments identified Macomb County as an area in need of the benefits that a well-managed urban forest provides those living around it. This need comes after decades of urban tree canopy degradation by Dutch elm disease and emerald ash borer.

Since 2015, the Blue Water Conservation District (formerly the Sanilac and St. Clair Conservation District) has been in partnership with Macomb County to help expand conservation programs offered through the USDA's 2014 Farm Bill. The Blue Water Conservation District is now in partnership with Macomb County to support the Urban Restoration Program by expanding our Spring Tree Sale to residents of Macomb County! These residents will be able to purchase a selection of trees, shrubs, and fruit bearing trees that will support the Urban Forest Partnership's desires and goals to improve infrastructure, public health, property values, and quality of life. Distribution of pre-ordered plants are held in conjunction with the Macomb County Arbor Day Celebration at the Warren Civic Center. To learn more about this program, visit [www. Bluewatercd.org](http://www.Bluewatercd.org) or call (810) 984-3865 x5.