



Van Buren Conservation District October 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

As we enjoy Fall, we have wrapped up recycling collection events and are reminding folks that year-round opportunities are available! We are also working on next year's Food, Farm, & Fun Guide, and we'd love it if you'd help us find great businesses in Van Buren County to include. We will have tax bill inserts to you by the requested date as well. Please feel free to reach out to us anytime with questions and concerns.

Conservation is work done best with partners. Thank you for being one of them!

Recycling Collections: One-day collections have finished up for 2024! We look forward to sharing total impact numbers with you in next month's report. In the meantime, several recycling opportunities continue. These services are available at no direct cost to all Van Buren County residents and landowners. Services made available through EGLE grants, VBCD Operations millage, Van Buren County funds, and municipal contributions.

- **Electronic recycling** | Available year-round at:
 - Community Thrift Shop | 1000 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw | Call 269-657-4186 for hours
 - Senior Services of Van Buren County | 8337 M-140, South Haven | Call 269-468-9476 for hours
- **Year-round tire recycling** | Available May - October at:
 - Columbia Township Transfer Station | 18868 52 ½ St., Grand Junction | Saturdays and 1st Sundays 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
 - Cover Township Transfer Station | 1 ¼ miles west of M-140 on 34th Ave. | Saturdays 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
 - Village of Decatur | coming in 2025!
- **Battery recycling** | Available year-round at:
 - Hartford Public Library
 - Paw Paw Public Library
 - South Haven Senior Services Center
 - Van Buren Conservation District Office
 - Van Buren District Library Branches: Antwerp Sunshine, Bangor, Covert, Lawrence, Webster Memorial (Decatur)

Food, Farm, Fun Guide Advertising Due January 15: We work with you but also our farms, food and drink producers, and plant nurseries and florists. The folks who work with and steward our shared natural resources every day. We promote these awesome folks with our Guide and marketing. Local conservation done by supporting our farmers, bolstering our local food system, and promoting business working with our land and water. The bonus is we're not push-y, the profits are for our advertisers and not in selling ads. The Guide also promotes our county's public green spaces, museums, festivals, and non-profits working in natural resources.

How you can help:

- Share this information!
- Print and hang our flier (see attached)
- See or share the Food, Farm, & Fun Guide for yourself:

1035 E. Michigan Avenue, Paw Paw, Michigan 49079
269.657.4030 x5 ◊ www.VanBurenCD.org ◊ info@vanburencd.org



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- Food, Farm, & Fun Guide (webpage and digital booklet): VanBurenCD.org/food-farm-fun
- Advertising information: VanBurenCD.org/2025-fffg-advertise

Technical Assistance to Help Address Wastewater Challenges: Many rural, small, and Tribal systems face unique financial and operational challenges, including aging infrastructure, workforce shortages, increasing costs, and declining rate bases. EPA's grant funding will be used to assess the most pressing water challenges in communities, provide training on water infrastructure and management best practices, help communities navigate the federal funding application process, and strategically invest in reliable infrastructure solutions.

EPA is accepting applications until November 25, 2024. Information about how to apply is available on our Training and Technical Assistance Program for Rural, Small, and Tribal Wastewater Systems [webpage](#).

EPA Announcement - Final Rule on Lead Pipe Replacement and Available Funding: The Biden-Harris Administration issued a final rule requiring drinking water systems across the country to identify and replace lead pipes within 10 years. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has several funding sources for complying with this final rule.

Learn more about the final rule, grants, funding, and projects here:

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-issues-final-rule-requiring-replacement-lead-pipes-7>

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - In September, the Ag and Water Quality team coordinated our annual aerial fly-on cover crop co-op. Over 3,400 acres of cover crops were planted in two days with this method.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) - The Strike Team worked at record pace to manage the Phragmites and Japanese knotweed along Van Buren County rights-of-way. Strike Team crew member, Cole Lambrich, moved on to his next position with Pizzo Native Plant Nursery. We wrote and completed our fourth GLRI proposal for invasive species management for partners. High-priority invasive species were managed and surveyed in partnership with EGLE and DNR.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - September was a busy month for the specialist in regards to covering Cass County in the absence of a technician for that county. All of these Cass County farms will be reverifications for MAEAP and the specialist. Although, it is the first time working with them for the Van Buren specialist aside from the one in Edwardsburg which will be a new three-system verification when they are ready. The plan for the new fiscal year is to split Cass County into three parts to be split between Cass, St Joseph, and Van Buren Counties to provide coverage. The Van Buren specialist has already developed a map that the other technicians and the MAEAP Verifier agree works and everyone seems happy with. For FY24 end,



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the specialist is happy with his final numbers. Reverifications have been hard to get done lately because many of those farmers need to make changes before Verification can be completed. The specialist is already scheduling assessments and Verifications for FY25.

- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) – This month, we had our 2nd annual “Grazing Workshop” at the Farm Research Cooperative in Bloomingdale. An excellent time was had by around 80 guests and a further 10 staff members of the VBCD. The highlight of the day wasn’t the speakers, although they were all great as well, but it was the lunch. Around 80% of the lunch served was grown within Van Buren County. Link to Article on Grazing Workshop from the Farmers Exchange Further highlights of the month include finishing up our 2024 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) fillings, and getting prepped and ready for the next fiscal year and all the new practices and funding that will be coming with it.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) – We were out in the community this month attending public events and holding the Paw Paw River Cleanup. We cleared over 5 miles of river of trash! Check out the photos to see what the VBCD did for the community this month!
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) – September begins our wrap up of the collection season. We visited Columbia Township for a passenger & semi tire and electronic collection to start the month. After that, grant prep and reporting started to occupy our minds as we barrel towards the end of the fiscal year. We are excited to be wrapping up a few of the recycling infrastructure projects at transfer stations within the next month and see others taking shape.