



Van Buren Conservation District March 2026 Program Update

Spring will be here before we know it, and we have a lot in store for Van Buren County. As always, the VBCD is here to help you, our community, and natural resources. We'd love to hear from you!

Grant Received – The Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development recently awarded us a Regenerative Agriculture Education & Outreach grant to expand and enhance education and outreach events that promote regenerative agriculture practices and farmer-to-farmer networks. Be sure to check out our Farming for the Future conference (March 11) and an on-farm field day that will be scheduled later this year.

Tree Sale – Last chance! The pre-sale period closes March 29 at 11:59 PM. Leftover seedlings will be available for sale April 10 and 11, but we usually sell out of many species before then. Adding these seedlings to your property encourages large scale pollinator and wildlife habitat building and adds to our community's beauty. Profits from the sale go back into our conservation efforts and programs. Shop the sale at VanBurenCD.org/Shop

Farming for the Future – We're excited to host our 19th Farming for the Future Conference! Supporting Van Buren County farms, businesses, and stewardship is important to us. The event includes the resources, experts, and topics to support that vital work.

Date & Time: March 11, 2026 | 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Location: Van Buren Conference Center | 490 S Paw Paw St., Lawrence, MI 49064

Registration required. Lunch will be provided. [To register, click here.](#)

Emily Hickmott

Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

Upcoming Events (details available on [our website](#))

- Farming for the Future Conference | March 11
- Discover with the District: Kal-Haven Trail | Saturday, March 21 | VanBurenCD.org/discover-2026
- VBCD Board Meeting | March 25 | VanBurenCD.org/About
- Tree Sale Order Pickup & Leftover Sale | Friday, April 10 & Saturday April, 11 | VanBurenCD.org/shop
- VBCD Board Meeting | April 22 | VanBurenCD.org/About
- VBCD Annual Meeting & Director Election | July 17 | details to be announced



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Program Updates

Resource Recovery & Recycling (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) – Five communities have worked with us to make their drop-off centers a place that you can bring foam in for recycling year-round. You can learn more about where and how by checking out the announcement at VanBurenCD.org/foam-recycling Our 2026 collection events have been announced. This year's electronic recycling opportunities have been changed to make it easier to keep those valuable materials in the economy. VanBurenCD.org/van-buren-county-recycling-collections

Outreach (*Jacob Diljak*) – Jacob delivered annual reports to our local municipal offices and partners, highlighting the impacts of last year's work. He is wrapping up the Food, Farm, Fun Guide, which should be ready to check out in April, just in time for our Tree Seedling Sale event which he's also been working hard to organize and make a success. Our goal is to see over 13,000 native seedlings planted in Van Buren County and Southwest Michigan through this sale this year.

Agriculture & Water Quality Team (*Erin Fuller and Colleen Forestieri*) – In 2025, we helped local farmers install 396 acres of no-till and 3,112 acres of cover crops. These best management practices prevented about 1,150 TONS of sediment runoff to our lakes and streams. We provided \$100,128 in cost-share dollars to help farmers try conservation practices. We also worked with lakefront landowners to plant 300 native trees and shrubs to help keep our lakes clean.

Invasive Species SWxSW Corner CISMA Team (*Alex Florian and Jena Johnson*) – We should receive decisions from funders on the grant applications we submitted last fall in the coming weeks which helps us finish planning our invasive species management and education for the rest of the year. February saw us connecting with local contractors about their role in preventing the spread of invasive species. We also started the process of hiring the VBCD's seasonal Invasive Species Strike Team Crew.

Conservation Technical Assistance Program: MAEAP and Regenerative Agriculture Programs (*Kyle Mead*) – Kyle has been visiting producers for both new and re-assessments and has completed several verifications this last month. He also restarted a state-wide CTAP Tech Team Monthly Meeting (virtual) to provide MAEAP training to newer technicians. These help other technicians get producers to the finish line of MAEAP Verification. The tech has also been assisting NRCS staff with I&E worksheets (5 producers) needed for NRCS Contracting as well as Record Collecting from producers to verify compliance for CSP payments (6 producers).



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Natural Resource Technical Assistance (*Gabriel Francisco*) - Gabe continued to meet with landowners about their resource concerns on-property and in the office. Federal conservation program payment deadlines and application deadlines continue to be a focus of his time. Contact our office for help navigating federal programs to assist with land and water concerns.

Forestry Assistance Program (*Benjamin Savoie, Barry Conservation District*) - Ben is working across nine counties, including Van Buren County, supporting our forests. Working with landowners, Ben works in the Qualified Forest Program to save landowners money and strengthen forest health. Thank you to Van Buren County's Digital Information team for helping Ben connect with landowners who could benefit from this program.