



Van Buren Conservation District

May 2026 Report

Tree Sale Success - With the help of numerous volunteers and partners, we were able to distribute over 13,000 tree seedlings that will create new trees, shrubs, flowers, and dune grass. Thank you to everyone who helped us with this habitat project that we've been doing in one form or another since the 1950s!

Food, Farm, & Fun Guides - The 2026 Food, Farm, & Fun Guides have arrived and are making their way around Van Buren County! Be sure to pick one up to see the latest from our advertisers and partners about all the food and fun to be had locally this year. From wildflowers in trails and parks to nursery and greenhouse flowers from local producers, there's lots to discover this May.

Recycling Events - As Materials Management Planning continues in our region, Project Manager Kalli Marshall continues to offer opportunities to learn more and influence the planning process. Don't miss this season's last two educational events on May 20 and June 24!

May is when our recycling events kick off, and they wouldn't be such a success without the contributions from our partners: Van Buren County, townships, villages, & cities, the Van Buren Intermediate School District, and the State of Michigan. See details below and on our website.

VBCD Newsletter - Our subscriber newsletter is now available on our website at VanBurenCD.org/News and will be attached to these update emails going forward. We hope this helps you stay connected. As always, reach out anytime with questions, ideas, and concerns.

Emily Hickmott

Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

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

- Volunteer Water Monitoring | Sunday, May 3
- Paw Paw Conservation Club Open House | Sunday, May 3
- Antwerp Township Seniors & Veterans Expo | Monday, May 4
- Electronics Recycling Event - Porter Township | Tuesday, May 5
- Electronics Transfer Station Host Drop-off - Decatur | Saturday, May 9 and Saturday, May 16
- Board Director Nominating Petitions and Certificates of Circulation Due | Monday, May 18 | 4:30 PM
- Materials Management Planning Demystified | Wednesday, May 20
- Memorial Day - office closed | Monday, May 25



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- VBCD Board Meeting | Wednesday, May 27
- VBCD at the Decatur Night Market | Friday, May 29
- Recycle Roundup - Paw Paw | Saturday, June 6
- Electronics Recycling Event - City of Bangor | Wednesday, June 10
- Electronics Transfer Station Host Drop-off - Bangor | Saturday, June 13 and Saturday, June 20
- Presentation at Covert Park Beach & Campground | Saturday, June 20
- Juneteenth National Independence Holiday | Friday, June 19 | office closed
- VBCD Board Meeting | Wednesday, June 24
- Materials Recovery Facility Public Tour | Wednesday, June 24

Program Updates

Resource Recovery & Recycling (*Kalli Marshall*) – March was a busy time as event season kicked-off! We prepped for the VBCD Annual Tree Sale, finalized collection events and services for the year, and so much more. Throughout the month, we completed the 2026 Scrap Tire Grant with our 6 partner counties. The month concluded with a meeting of our transfer station staff from around the county to meet, learn, and strategize about the great Recycling and Waste Drop-off Centers throughout Van Buren County.

Agriculture & Water Quality Team (*Erin Fuller and Colleen Forestieri*) – In March, staff hosted our nineteenth annual Farming for the Future conference at the Van Buren Conference Center. This conference is designed to support farmers and connect them to resources, experts, and topics that support their vital work while protecting the environment. Staff kicked off the event with a brief summary of their projects, then introduced keynote speaker John Pike, who spoke about cover crops. After the keynote address, breakout sessions on grain, livestock, and perennial topics were held. Over one hundred people attended this year's conference.

Invasive Species SWxSW Corner CISMA Team (*Alex Florian and Jena Johnson*) – In March 2026, the CISMA team completed their second interim report for their GLRI wetland corridor project. The team also did invasive shrub management for that same grant with the help of Gabe Francisco and the Pokagon Band. Jena Johnson finished doing similar work for Chikaming Open Lands. We gave a presentation to the Van Buren County Road Commission Commissioners to update them on the work the team has done to manage invasive species in county road rights of way since 2022, and to discuss the future of the VBCRC and VBCD's collaboration. The CISMA Team interviewed applicants for two full-time seasonal positions and one part-time position for 2026 and sent official offers to 3 applicants. All 3 offers were tentatively accepted.



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Conservation Technical Assistance Program: MAEAP and Regenerative Agriculture Programs

(Kyle Mead) – The specialist worked hard to wrap up two different events in March. One was Farming for the Future and the other was the Region 4 Envirothon Competition. He still found time to assist producers with reporting their water use, to complete a few risk assessments on farms and to attend training. More Verifications are scheduled for April.

Natural Resource Technical Assistance *(Gabriel Francisco)* – In March, Gabe finished the work GLRI grant work treating invasive species at both Dr. Lawless Park and Camp Tamarack. The month of March was also busy getting EQIP plans in order for the 2026 1st round cycle and learning about the new Regenerative Agriculture Pilot Program which is a new fund pool offered through the USDA this year. At Farming for the Future Conference, Gabriel Francisco planned the Livestock track. We welcomed Brandi Mitchell of Mitchell Cat Creek Farm for her session on Regenerative Beef Grazing, and Katie Ockhert of MSU-E for her session on Emergency Responses to Agriculture Incidents of Livestock (ERAIL). Both sessions highlighted the importance of good animal management skills especially as they pertain to regenerative agriculture.

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.