



Van Buren Conservation District

July 2026 Report

Annual Meeting – Please join us at our annual meeting on Friday, July 17 at the Lawrence Village Park to celebrate the conservation work we accomplish together, honor awardees, and share a locally-sourced breakfast. All are invited to attend, and the program will be offered both at 8:30 AM and at 9:30 AM. You can find more details at VanBurenCD.org/News

Conservation District Millage Renewal Proposal – The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approved ballot language to place a renewal millage proposal for the Van Buren Conservation District millage on the August 4, 2026 primary ballot. This millage proposal is at 0.0989 mill for a period of 10 years, 2026 through 2035 inclusive.

Recycling Collections – Now that tire recycling has been added to 10 transfer stations throughout the county, we have revamped electronics collections. This year, we're offering four 1-day collections for electronics, and after each event, our trailer goes to a transfer station to make electronics recycling easier than ever. Don't miss the remaining opportunities detailed below. If you do, don't stress, we offer free electronics recycling at the Community Thrift Shop in Paw Paw and at the Senior Services Center in South Haven year-round.

Spotted Lanternfly Lookout – The SWxSW Corner Cisma Team of the Van Buren Conservation District is recruiting people in Southwest Michigan who would like to participate in trapping and surveying of the invasive Spotted lanternfly. If you have a Tree of Heaven on your property and/or grow grapes, you may qualify! Through this year-long program, you will receive...

- One free trap
- Technical support from experts
- Training on how to set up traps, identify Spotted lanternfly, and what to do if you find them
- Check-ins with dedicated staff

Contact us by July 27, and we'll let you know if you qualify! Cisma Coordinator Alex Florian at InvasivesED@VanBurenCD.org or 269-633-9044

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

- Independence Day Holiday observed | Friday, July 3 | office closed
- Electronics Recycling Event – City of Hartford | Wednesday, July 8
- Electronics Transfer Station Host Drop-off – Keeler | Saturday, July 11 & Saturday, July 18
- VBCD Board Meeting | Wednesday, July 15
- VBCD Annual Meeting | Friday, July 17
- South Haven Farmers Market | Wednesday, July 29



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Program Updates

Resource Recovery & Recycling (*Kalli Marshall*) – May kicked off the collection event season with the Porter Township Electronics Collection event. The VBCD trailer was then hosted by Decatur Waste and Recycling Center for two weeks for easy electronics recycling. We were busy this month preparing budgets for the upcoming fiscal year, getting summer staff started, attending several community events, and holding the second Materials Management Planning Demystified Event to engage our municipal leaders and residents.

Agriculture & Water Quality Team (*Erin Fuller and Colleen Forestieri*) – In May, the Water Quality Team coordinated the planting of nearly 200 new native trees and shrubs in southwest Michigan as part of a grant project through the Van Buren Conservation District and Michigan Lakes and Streams Association. This project offers landowners on six lakes in southwest Michigan (Round, Gravel, and Eagle Lakes in Van Buren County and Harwood, Birch, and Baldwin Lakes in Cass County) the opportunity to have native trees and shrubs planted on their properties. These plantings will reduce runoff, improve the quality of water in our lakes and streams, and provide valuable wildlife habitat. This project is made possible by a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant through the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Invasive Species SWxSW Corner Cisma Team (*Alex Florian and Jena Johnson*) – In May 2026, three new seasonal employees joined the Cisma Team. Skyler, Danny, and Brad have already helped the Team immensely by assisting with garlic mustard pulls at Camp Tamarack and Dr. T.K. Lawless Park in Cass County, installing and checking spotted lanternfly traps at ~15 sites across the service area, and conducting management at 9 known cinnamon vine locations. The Team also attended a Red Swamp Crayfish (RSC) I.D. training, and an European Frogbit (EFB) training. During a survey in Cass County, we confirmed our region's first known location of EFB. Lastly, Alex and Jena helped the District host one of their bi-annual Volunteer Water Monitoring Events.

Conservation Technical Assistance Program: MAEAP and Regenerative Agriculture Programs (*Kyle Mead*) – The CTAP Technician has been working to schedule reverifications for producers that were re-assessed during the winter months as well as attending training and fellow technician field days to further education. The technician has exceeded his reverification goal and site visit goal for the fiscal year. Soil health work has begun; the tech will continue field visits to complete soil health assessments and take soil health analysis samples to send into Cornell. This work needs to be completed prior to harvest.



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Natural Resource Technical Assistance (*Gabriel Francisco*) – At the start of May, Conservation Technician Gabriel Francisco and Conservation Specialist Colleen Forestieri were invited to the Paw Paw Later Elementary STEM Day, which has now become an annual tradition. Gabriel Francisco teamed up with his wife Emily Haluda who works for the Pollinator Partnership together leading a session on making “pollinator pellets” which were filled with native wildflower seeds, and Colleen presented her session on pollution runoff. She was able to borrow the Enviroscope pollution runoff model from Michigan State University Extension. The rest of the month, the technician assisted NRCS soil conservationist Kami Williams with Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) clients and tidying up files and paperwork from previous years’ clients.