Van Buren Conservation District
November 2026 Report

Advertise with us! Food, Farm, & Fun Guide 2027 - Are you a farmer, local food or drink business, nursery or greenhouse, or another business that works with our natural resources? Join the Food, Farm, & Fun Guide (the Guide)! We proudly promote our local economy and support local farms and businesses by promoting folks like you. Advertising is priced at a variety of levels. Discounts are available. Try us out for a year; first-time advertisers in Van Buren County receive a free quarter-page ad or credit to a larger ad. Learn more about advertising in the Food, Farm, & Fun Guide here: VanBurenCD.org/2027-fffg-advertise. With questions or to chat, contact us by call/text 269-633-9054 or email at Info@VanBurenCD.org. Be sure to register by January 15, 2027!

Resource Recovery Hits New Record Highs! - The VBCD's Resource Recovery Program offers recycling and safe hazardous waste disposal. With you, we conserve valuable materials and protect our land and water.

Check out the difference we made in 2026!
💡 **32,112** lbs. of household hazardous waste (HHW) safely disposed
🎨 **9,167** lbs. of oil-based paint safely disposed
📺 **95,975** lbs. of electronics recycled
🛞 **12,216** tires recycled
🪫 **~1,850** lbs. of batteries recycled
📦 **1,090** lbs. of foam (Styrofoam™/polystyrene) recycled
🚜 Over **500** agriculture pesticide containers safely disposed and recycled

With the VBCD Programs Millage, County and municipal contributions, and grants - we're able to bring you this program and its services. You and your neighbors made a *huge* difference with small actions.

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's cover crops being spread by aircraft! - Colleen Forestieri, Conservation Specialist at the VBCD, has been promoting, cost-sharing, and organizing an aerial cover crop co-op on corn and soybean fields for the last 13 years. By planting cover crop seeds via airplane, we're able to get those seeds in the ground before the corn or soybeans are harvested, as early as August or September. This early start benefits the cover crop - they're able to start growing before the weather turns cold and we lose daylight hours. Planting via airplane is also efficient - you can cover a much larger area more quickly than you can with more traditional drilling methods. Once those cover crops start growing, they offer a host of benefits: they improve soil health, recycle nutrients on the farm fields, and prevent polluted runoff into our local waterways. In 2026, our aerial cover crop co-op helped farmers plant about 2,400 acres of cover crops, which will prevent about 1,800 TONS of sediment runoff from those fields.

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Upcoming Events (details available on our website)

- November 11 | Veteran's Day | office closed
- November 11 | Two Rivers Coalition Annual Meeting | Van Buren ISD Conference Center
- November 18 | VBCD Board Meeting | USDA Service Center Paw Paw
- November 26 | Thanksgiving Holiday | office closed

Program Updates

Agriculture & Water Quality Team *(Erin Fuller and Colleen Forestieri)* - In September, the Water Quality Team completed a ten year water sampling partnership with the University of Notre Dame. In that time, the team has worked on multiple avenues of water quality research, including mitigating farm runoff, antimicrobial resistance genes in stream systems, and impacts of cover crops on water quality at the watershed scale, effects of conservation practices like no-till, drainage water management and cover crops on farm runoff.

Conservation Technical Assistance Program: MAEAP and Regenerative Agriculture Programs *(Kyle Mead)* - The CTAP Specialist has largely settled down with CTAP work, there has been a little bit of work done on Soil Health management plans as the soil analysis results trickled in from Cornell, but largely he has been working to write Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) plans. With the specialist writing these plans, it helps growers get the funding they have been waiting on, and it helps the NRCS staff with their backlog of work.

Invasive Species SWxSW Corner CISMA Team *(Alex Florian and Jena Johnson)* - In September 2026, the team was made aware of a new stiltgrass site in Berrien County by a local environmental contractor, and VBCD staff discovered a new Red Swamp Crayfish (RSC) location in Cass County. The team continued planning how we can best respond to these new detections, including the new SLF detection we made in August. The team also finished surveys for Hydrilla for the year in the St. Joseph River and Lemon Creek.

Resource Recovery & Recycling *(Kalli Marshall)* - The year is beginning to wrap up, but that doesn't mean the events are! September's highlight was our visit to Hammond Farms as a part of Michigan Organic's Council Compost Awareness month. We had 15 attendees get to experience the start-to-finish process of composting at this grand facility. This month, we also took the opportunity to share updates and brag on our programs at a few events such as the Great Start Human Collaborative Council and the Michigan Sustainability Conference.

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