



CONSERVATION UPDATE

A publication of the Washtenaw County Conservation District

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Our Mission

*To educate and assist the people
of Washtenaw County with the
conservation and management
of their natural resources.*

Web Access

www.washtenawcd.org

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Washtenaw County CD
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A Waste Knot Partner

District & Forestry Program Funding Cuts Proposed by Governor

Washtenaw County residents may lose services offered by the Washtenaw County Conservation District, if State budget proposals recently offered by Governor Granholm are approved. But not just Washtenaw County, every County in Michigan will be impacted. In addition to grant cuts for the remainder of fiscal year 2007, the Governor's proposed 2008 budget eliminates base operation grant funding to Conservation Districts (\$1.516 million) and also eliminates the \$1.0 million funding for the Forestry Assistance Program which is provided through Conservation Districts.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR WASHTENAW COUNTY?

An immediate impact is the reduction in size of this newsletter from 6 pages to 4. And, while impacts will be kept to a minimum for the remainder of fiscal year 2007, **if the proposed funding reductions remain for fiscal year 2008, drastic cuts to District programs and services will result.**

- *Services of the District forester will be eliminated.*
- *Day to day operations of the District may be reduced.*
- *"Conservation Update" newsletters and other publications may be dropped.*
- *Tree, shrub & native plant sales may be reduced without staff to conduct the sales.*
- *Assistance with Farm Bill Conservation Programs may be limited, causing delays in development of conservation plans and documents required for participation in these programs.*

Due in part to the partnership between the Conservation District and the USDA NRCS in 2006, \$1.75 million in cost share and incentive payments were brought into Washtenaw County through such federal conservation programs as the Conservation Reserve Program,

Conservation Security Program, Farm & Ranchland Protection Program and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. Conservation District staff assist with the implementation of these programs.

Several farm properties protected through the Ann Arbor Greenbelt Program in 2006 have benefited from Farm & Ranchland Protection Program grants which required conservation plans developed in part, with Conservation District help. With limited or no assistance from the Conservation District, such funds coming into Washtenaw County's economy could be jeopardized.

Conservation Districts, which operate on a very minimal amount of State funding, are a very effective and cost-efficient way to assist landowners with conservation issues. Cutting these State appropriations will be devastating to most Districts in Michigan and, therefore, devastating to the citizens and natural resources that depend on them—Washtenaw County included. By keeping the funding in place, Conservation Districts can continue to protect and enhance the natural resources of Michigan.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

If you have taken advantage of, or been benefited by any program or assistance offered by the Conservation District—from the forester, to the tree sale, to soils information, to a conservation plan, or any other service—**please call, write, fax or e-mail your State Senators, Representatives and the Governor** and ask them to restore fiscal year 2008 funding for Conservation Districts to a minimum of \$20,000 per District, and restore the \$1.0 million funding for the Forestry Assistance Program.

Listed on the back page is contact information for the Governor and State Legislators serving Washtenaw County.

Thank you for your help and support!



Forestry Niche

by *ANDY HENRIKSEN, District Forester*

Without a Forester



The page 1 article of this issue of "Conservation Update" lists services offered by the Conservation District that would be impacted, if State funding were cut for 2008. How might elimination of Forestry Assistance Program funding play out in regards to on-the-land forestry management? Let's look at two scenarios.

Scenario 1

A landowner inherited a 20-acre woodlot several years ago and decided to keep it as a long-term investment and a possible source of timber income.

One day a timber buyer stops by and expresses interest in having a look at the woodlot. A while later, the buyer returns to the house and offers him \$22,000 to cut a few trees. The landowner, having had no idea his trees were worth that much, eagerly agrees. A month later the logging crew begins working. After a week, they finish, the landowner is paid and the timber buyer leaves.

Upon inspecting the woodlot, the landowner notices deep tire ruts in several low areas, several trees completely broken and some with bark scraped off. Also some tree tops are left in the creek and laying across the fence into the neighbor's property. "I guess this is why Dad hadn't sold timber for 40 years," he thinks.

This landowner will probably never realize that the timber he recently parted with was worth over \$50,000. He also will never fully realize the long-term ramifications of how the harvest was conducted. The logger took all the best trees, leaving him with only low-valued, poor quality growing stock that might not be commercially merchantable for another 40 years.

Scenario 2

Another landowner buys 10 acres of land, and hopes to plant a few acres to trees for her kids and grandkids to enjoy. After hearing that they are considered fast growing trees, she buys a few hundred red pine seedlings. They get off to a good start, and 10 years later, they're well over 10 feet tall.

Unfortunately, after another 10 years, the trees start dying. The landowner assumes this is the result of the bark beetles she finds. She will never understand that the real problem is that the trees were planted "off site," that is in an area with incompatible soils or other site conditions.

These are scenarios that the Conservation District Forester regularly helps landowners avoid.

Had the first landowner consulted with a professional forester he could have received a much higher price for his timber, avoided damage to his trees and soils, and been left with an attractive woodlot that could produce

an increasingly valuable timber crop every 10 to 15 years.

The second landowner would have learned that red pine is really only suited to sandy well-drained soils, and that she would have been better off with white pine or white spruce for her site. She also would know how to plant and maintain the trees properly.

These are just two examples of the ramifications of not having good technical assistance available to landowners. The Forestry Assistance Program ensures landowners are effectively able to manage their forests and open space, in a financially productive, ecologically responsible, and aesthetically pleasing way.

Please consider the impact that elimination of this program might have to you as an individual and to Washtenaw County as a whole.

Please contact the Governor and your State Legislators to share your feelings on the proposed budget cuts. See page 4 for contact information.

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WLT is a private, nonprofit organization working to protect farmland, natural areas and open space in the Washtenaw County region.



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- Respect private property ownership
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For more information please contact us at: (734) 302-5263 or info@washtenawlandtrust.org Web: www.washtenawlandtrust.org



Groundwater Gab

By Aistis Tumas, AmeriCorps Member
Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program

Springtime Tips for a Green Lawn

With over 30 million acres of lawn in the United States, lawn maintenance can have significant environmental impacts. While a healthy lawn can help to filter groundwater contaminants and prevent surface water runoff, excess use of lawn care products can harm water quality in our local watersheds.

With another long winter coming to an end, and many homeowners anxious to get outside and start maintaining lawns, spring is the perfect time to establish maintenance habits that will benefit both your lawn and the environment.

Here are some tips for maintaining a healthy lawn:

- **Mow high, mow often.** Set your mower blade to a high setting to keep grass blades between 3-4 inches. This will help to shade roots, conserve moisture, reduce runoff, and keep out weeds (including crabgrass).
- **Feed grass with clippings.** Mulching grass clippings into the lawn can provide nitrogen for grass and reduce the need for commercial fertilizers by up to half. Mulching does not lead to thatch buildup.
- **Fertilize responsibly.** If you fertilize your lawn once a year, late fall is the best time, when the roots that will sustain the grass the following year are actively growing. If you choose to fertilize in the spring, consider mulching or using a light application of fertilizer. Also, consider using slow-release fertilizers, which will gradually release nitrogen as the grass needs it and prevent excess fertilizer from being washed away as runoff.

The Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program offers free lawn care assessments for homeowners in Washtenaw County. Contact Aistis Tumas at (734) 761-6721 Ext. 101 to sign up for this free service, which will provide you with useful information on maintaining a healthy, environmentally-friendly lawn.



Conservationist Corner

By Steve Olds, District Conservationist

Are You Ready for the New Fertilizer Storage Regulations?

Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) regulation 642 defines bulk storage tanks as: "having a capacity greater than 2,500 gallons, or having a combined capacity of all tanks greater than 7,500 gallons, or mobile containers that store fertilizer on site for more than 30 days." If you meet any of the listed criteria, by August 13, 2008, you must have: 1. secondary containment, 2. an operational pad, 3. a discharge response plan.

According to Zach Cooley, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician, this can be accomplished by installing an Agrichemical Containment Facility (ACF). Under the new State regulation, there are a number of options for the secondary containment. These include; reinforced concrete, steel, earthen berm, and synthetic liners.

For the second part; the operational pad, you must have either a concrete pad, a portable pad or a closed containment system consisting of dry couplers, hoses under warranty, anti-flow devices, and a 150 gallon container under the point of transfer.

The third part of the regulation is the discharge response plan. According to the MDA, the plan must include the MDA spill hotline number, emergency numbers, a product list, and a site map identifying structures and water sources.

NRCS offers technical and financial assistance for ACF practices through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program. This is a voluntary conservation program authorized through the 2002 Farm Bill that addresses exiting resource concerns on farmland.

Copies of Regulation 642 are available by contacting the MDA Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division at 517-241-2979 or on the web at

www.michigan.gov/mda-bulkstorage

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Think Habitat!

For information on establishing food or habitat plots for pheasants and other wildlife, call Steve Schneider at (734) 662-2522 or write:

**Washtenaw County Chapter,
Pheasants Forever, PO Box
3478, Ann Arbor MI 48106-3478
Web Site: www.washtenawpf.org**

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(See page 1 article for details about contacting these officials.)

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