



CONSERVATION UPDATE

Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan

SUMMER 2008

Volume 40, Number 4

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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

Conservation Update is published in February, March, July, August & December and is available at no charge. To be placed on the mailing list, phone or send a request with complete address to:

Washtenaw County CD
7203 Jackson Road
Ann Arbor MI 48103-9506
Phone: (734) 761-6721 x 5



A Waste Knot Partner

AmeriCorps Groundwater Program to End

For 10 of the past 14 years, Washtenaw County has benefited from the service provided by AmeriCorps volunteers in delivering the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program (MGSP).

As of September 30, 2008 that program will come to an end as the MGSP will transition to a web-based system for delivering the residential groundwater program. The change is being made to allow more Michigan residents the opportunity to access MGSP residential educational tools than the current system has allowed, using AmeriCorps members to deliver the programming.

Initially AmeriCorps volunteers were charged with providing farmstead assessments using the Farm*A*Syst tool. Their role was then expanded to conduct both farmstead and household assessments.

In the year 2000, the MGSP changed to a two phase delivery system, with groundwater technicians assisting agricultural producers, and AmeriCorps volunteers assisting homeowners only, with evaluating their impacts on groundwater resources and implementing improvements.

The Conservation District is appreciative of the efforts by the AmeriCorps volunteers that have served Washtenaw County over the past 14 years in providing assistance to farmers and homeowners in protecting their groundwater.

Following is a list of all AmeriCorps members that have worked in Washtenaw County delivering the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program.:

1994: Mike Szynski
1995: Laurel Riemann
1996-97: None
1998: Mike Fitzgibbon

1999: Jason Frenzel
2000-01: Jazon Frenzel
(Groundwater Technician)
2002: Scott Nelson
2003: Mary Beth Lake
2004: Sarah Hemsteger
2005: Cecilia Govrik
2006: Lisa Perschke
2007-08: Aistis Tumas

Spring Tree & Plant Sale

The Washtenaw County Conservation District spring tree and native plant sale was recently completed with a total of 419 orders received for over 49,325 tree and shrub seedlings, and 668 native wildflower and prairie grass plants.

The District conducts two tree and plant sales each year to provide planting stock for such conservation purposes as reforestation, windbreaks and screens, erosion control, wildlife habitat and landscape naturalizing.

The District extends a big thank you to all our customers.

Fall Tree & Plant Sale

Plans are underway for the 2008 fall tree and native plant sale.

Offerings will include conifer transplants, a variety of native wildflower and prairie grass plants, and assorted planting aids.

Sale catalogs will be mailed out in late August. To add your name to the catalog mailing list, contact the District office at: (734) 761-6721 ext. 5.

Orders will be accepted until late September, with pick-up planned for early October.

Information will also be available on the District web site at: www.washtenawcd.org.



Forestry Niche

by **ANDY HENRIKSEN**, District Forester

How Much is My Walnut Tree Worth?

One of the most common phone calls that I receive are from landowners interested in marketing a tree or a few trees from their front or back yard. It usually doesn't take long before they tell me "I've heard walnut trees are worth \$10,000."

Unfortunately, this is rarely, if ever, the case.

While it is absolutely true that black walnut is a valuable timber species (along with sugar maple, black cherry and red and white oak), there are many factors that may devalue your yard grown tree. Economics dictates that in order for a timber buyer to be interested in purchasing a tree, the tree's value (as paid to the timber buyer by a mill) must exceed the cost of transporting, setting up, and running equipment on site, cutting the log, hauling the log to the mill, and paying the landowner for the tree.

Given the very nature of residential areas, yard trees are generally very difficult to harvest due to nearby power lines, buildings, roads, septic fields, and other obstacles. If a tree can't be felled to the ground quickly and efficiently, the removal cost is likely to exceed its timber value.

Generally, woods grown trees tend to be more valuable than open grown trees. They are more likely to have long straight solid boles (trunks) with minimal defects, and less likely to contain nails, wire, clothes lines, or have human-caused damage, such as that caused by mowers and string trimmers.

Often, log defects are not outwardly visible, such as heart rot, decay that occurs on the interior of the log. A buyer is typically less willing to take a risk on such a defect for one or two trees, which could yield very few usable board feet of lumber at a net loss to the buyer.

Because a timber buyer can typically harvest 50 to several hundred trees from a single woodlot, the set-up and transportation costs per tree are much lower, and the overall risk of defects is much lower.

All of this said, landowners may wish to contact a few commercial timber buyers for yard trees, provided they are of very good quality with a large, straight, long bole (minimum of 9 feet, 17 feet plus better), with no or few branches or defects, a valuable species, and easily accessible and removable. However, keep in mind that you may not get much of a positive response. Timber buyers in the area are listed at <http://washtenawcd.org/ps/timberbuyers.pdf>.

A few other options exist as well. There are several portable sawmill services in the area that can mill logs into custom boards on site (see page two of the timber buyers document listed above). Typically, they will charge the landowner for their time, and the landowner keeps the cut boards. This works well for a landowner who has an interest in woodworking, or has another use for the boards, as the milling cost per board foot will be significantly lower than retail prices.

Landowners that don't have a use for the lumber are typically responsible for marketing and selling the boards on their own. Fortunately, the internet has made this much easier. Auction sites like www.ebay.com, classified sales sites like www.craigslist.org, or websites dedicated to forestry and woodworking like www.woodweb.com and www.forestryforum.com can be great venues to sell wood products. Keep in mind that for most applications, you will need to properly stack and air dry your cut lumber for a year or more before you sell it or use it.

Unfortunately, most sawyers that I've talked with are only interested in milling logs that are already felled and accessible, so you may have to hire a tree service company to cut the tree down. You may be able to negotiate a lower price if the tree service doesn't need to cut up and dispose of the timber grade portion of the tree. Instruct the tree service to leave the usable portion of the bole intact on site.

Selling trees, whether it's one from your front yard or 200 from the back forty, is an involved process and this article only touches on a few aspects. If this is something you are considering please don't hesitate to contact me. And if you happen to sell a walnut tree for \$10,000, please let me know!

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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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- Allow landowners to leave a legacy of open land for future generations

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

Publications A*Syst You with Groundwater Protection

Roughly 3% of the planet's water is freshwater and only a tiny fraction of this is available to drink. In Michigan, almost half of our residents depend on groundwater for potable drinking water. So how can we, as citizens, help protect this valuable resource? Some of the most beneficial actions can be implemented in and around the home.

As of September 30, 2008 the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program (MGSP) will begin developing a web-based system to deliver information on groundwater protection to homeowners (see related article on page 1). During this period of transition, the Conservation District will continue offering free, printed MGSP publications including the Home*A*Syst, Lawn*A*Syst, and Lake*A*Syst. These publications help you to evaluate your household and lawn-care practices for risks to ground and surface water quality and offer best management practices.

So what's the difference between Home*A*Syst, Lawn*A*Syst, and Lake*A*Syst? The Home*A*Syst focuses on water conservation, household recycling, household hazardous waste storage and disposal, liquid fuels storage and disposal, stormwater management, water well characteristics and maintenance, septic system maintenance, and also contains information on lead paint and air quality.

The Lawn*A*Syst helps you evaluate the potential impact your lawn-care practices (e.g., mowing, fertilization, pest control) may have on ground and surface water quality. If you live on a lake, pond, or river, then Lake*A*Syst can help you determine the potential risk your home practices may pose on nearby surface water.

Groundwater is a shared resource, so your household and lawn-care practices may invariably affect the quality of drinking water for your community as a whole. Home*A*Syst, Lawn*A*Syst, and Lake*A*Syst are helpful exercises to help you reduce risks to this highly valuable resource.

If you are interested in any of these publications, please contact the District office at (734) 761-6721 ext. 5 and request a copy.



Conservationist Corner

By Steve Olds, District Conservationist

EQIP Funds Available to Livestock Producers for Development of Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP)

Federal financial assistance is available to Washtenaw County livestock producers to develop an approved Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP). The development and implementation of a CNMP will help ensure one is following the Michigan Department of Agriculture's Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices for Manure Management and Utilization (GAAMPs). This can result in protection under the state's Right to Farm Act.

Some of the items a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan addresses are: manure production; collection; treatment; transfer and utilization. Environmental concerns are addressed throughout the development of the CNMP. Additional information may be found at www.maeap.com

Funding comes through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The program is authorized under both the 2002 and 2007 Farm Bills. Additional information on EQIP may be found at <http://www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip.html>

Livestock producers may sign up for the development of a CNMP as a single-practice EQIP application. If approved, the contract holder would utilize an approved Technical Service Provider (TSP) from the private sector to develop the CNMP.

Depending on the livestock type and the number of animal units, payment rates range from \$5,500 to \$16,500. By developing a CNMP, one also becomes eligible to apply for additional financial assistance under EQIP, to install conservation practices that may be called for in the CNMP.

If you have any questions, or would like additional information about signing up to develop a comprehensive nutrient management plan, call 734-761-6722 x3. You may also visit the USDA Service Center at 7203 Jackson Road, Ann Arbor.



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Washtenaw County Conservation District
7203 Jackson Rd
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It's Fair Time!

With summer here, it's time for the fairs. Community fairs are coming to Chelsea and Saline (the Manchester Fair was held July 8-12). Fair dates are:

- **Chelsea: August 19-23;** and
- **Saline: September 2-6.**



The Conservation District will again have a display at the fairs highlighting programs and services. Support your community and enjoy the sights, sounds, food, fun and

activities that your local community fair provides!

This Conservation Update is sponsored by



Think Habitat!

For information on establishing food or habitat plots for pheasants and other wildlife, call

Norwin Raus at (734) 320-4177

or write:

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Web Site: www.washtenawpf.org



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