

WINTER 2012
Volume 45, Number 1

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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 annually in 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 ext. 5



A Waste Knot Partner

“Michigan Wolves: Past, Present & Future” at 65th District Annual Meeting

Throughout Europe, wolves were considered a menace for centuries, and in North America they received the same fate as European settlers spread across the land. In Michigan, gray wolves were exterminated from the Lower Peninsula by the early 1900's and were essentially gone from the state by the 1950's. Now wolves are making a comeback as a result of state and federal legal protection, and are receiving increased tolerance from humans.

Steve Schaub, MAEAP Technician and Education Coordinator with the Tuscola Conservation District will discuss the history, range, pack structure and current status and issues surrounding wolves in Michigan at the Washtenaw County Conservation District's 65th Annual Meeting.

Schaub has been involved with the Timber Wolf Alliance for about 20 years, serving on their advisory board for 12 years. He also has served on the Wolf Advisory Committee that developed guidelines for the current Michigan DNR Wolf Management Plan, and continues to serve on the DNR Wolf Forum Committee.

District Director Election

All residents of Washtenaw County who are of legal age may vote in the election of two district Directors, by one of two methods following completion of a Voter Registration form and demonstration of residency by 1 piece of identification.

1.) **Absentee Ballots** can be completed by mail or at the Conservation District Office, during regular business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, by Wednesday, January 16th, 2013.

2.) **At the Annual Meeting** on January 17, 2013.



Director Candidates

There are two candidates are seeking the two Director positions:

- **Jill Dohner** of Webster Township, owner of Rustic Roots Farm with a forestry background; and
- **Donald Rentschler** of Lodi Township who farms with his son and is a current Board Director.

Award Presentations

The meeting program will also include presentation of the 2012 Conservation Farmer of the Year and Tree Conservationist Awards. See page 2 for more information about the award recipients.

The Annual Meeting will be held:
Thursday, January 17, 2013
6:30 p.m.

at the Washtenaw County
Farm Council Grounds
5055 Ann Arbor-Saline Road

The public is welcome to attend.
A buffet dinner will open the evening.
Cost is \$10.00 for adults and \$5.00
for children 12 and under.

Reservations for the dinner are needed, but payment can be made at the door.

To make your reservations, call the District Office at:

(734) 761-6721 ext. 5,
by January 11, 2013.

2012 Conservation Award Recipients

Conservation Farmer of the Year



The Washtenaw County Conservation District is pleased to present the 2012, "Walter Wolfgang Memorial", Conservation Farmer of the Year Award to Michael Mahrle.

Mike and his wife Kim operate a 155 acre cash crop and livestock farm in Bridgewater Township, growing corn, soybeans and wheat. They also raise about 30 cattle from calf to butcher weight for sale to individuals and livestock sales.

The Mahrle family has been farming in Bridgewater Township since 1839 with Mike being the 5th generation. There are two farmsteads, including a 40-acre centennial farm on Austin Road dating back to 1909, and a 90-acre farmstead on Lima Center Road purchased by Mike's father Melvin in 1954.

In 1986 Melvin contacted the Conservation District for assistance with drainage and no-till, and Mike rented the District's no-till corn planter leased from Diuble Equipment that year. Mike is a journeyman machinist working off the farm, so using no-till gave him more time flexibility, as well as cost savings.

But the benefit of using no-till Mike noted most was that it helps maintain good soil structure. Mike went to 100% no-till in 1992 for all crops, using a no-till corn planter for his corn, and a Great Plains no-till drill for soybeans and wheat.

"Leaving the ground better than what you started with by being a good steward of the land is why we use conservation practices," said Mike. And Mike's conservation work has not stopped with no-till. In 1996 he closed two abandoned wells, one each on both farmsteads through the AmeriCorps Farm*A*Syst program.

Then in 2005, Mike started participating in the Conservation Security Program. This includes continued use of no-till and field borders, as well as nutrient management, pest management, recycling of used motor oil, and using biodiesel and ethanol fuels when available.

Mike has used variable rate nutrient application since 1996, determined by a regular soil testing program. He has all his fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides custom applied, using low hazard rating products, which reduces on-farm water quality risks, and fits his off the farm work schedule as well.

In recent years, Mike has participated in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, developing a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, and most recently closing an animal waste storage impoundment on the Austin Road farm.

Mike dries his own corn, and uses some of it to power a corn boiler which provides both heat and hot water to his home. "We installed it several years ago and it has worked well. We use about 350 bushels of corn that we grow ourselves which reduces our heating costs," said Mike.

The Mahrle's are members of Farm Bureau and Zion Lutheran Church and they have four children.

Doing his part to conserve our soil and water resources through good conservation efforts, and an overall stewardship philosophy has helped Mike Mahrle maintain a successful farm operation. The Conservation District is pleased to recognize Michael Mahrle as the 2012 Conservation Farmer of the Year.

Tree Conservationist

To recognize excellent tree planting efforts, the Conservation District is pleased to present the 2012 Tree Conservationist Award to Gary Moore of Dexter Township.

Gary purchased 20 acres on McKinley Road in the late 1960's. The land included some cropland, several stands of small hardwood trees and wetland. Starting in 1969, Gary planted several hundred red pine trees and autumn olive shrubs. Since then, he has planted 30-50 trees each year for the past 42 years.

"I have always planted trees for wildlife habitat", said Gary. "Some for windbreaks, but mostly for wildlife", he said. Over 2,000 trees and shrubs planted over the years have created habitat excellent throughout his property.

While Gary has planted primarily red and white pines, blue, Norway and white spruces, he has also planted ash, firs, locust, maples, tulip tree, white birch, mountain ash, autumn olive, highbush cranberry, fruit trees, and others. Gary noted, "my farmer neighbors didn't like the autumn olive I first planted, but they sure make good wildlife habitat."

In addition to trees and shrubs, Gary plants food plots to attract wildlife, including corn, brassica mix and seed mix obtained from Pheasants Forever. Being an avid hunter, planting trees and food plots has created the perfect environment for hunting on his property.

And, his planting efforts have paid off, as deer, wild turkey, wood ducks, squirrels, rabbits and other wildlife have been seen on the property.

He is a member of the Chelsea Rod and Gun Club, Ducks Unlimited, Michigan Trappers and Predator Caller Association, National Rifle Association, Pheasants Forever, and the Michigan United Conservation Clubs. As on MUCC member, Gary spends lots of time at the MUCC Cedar Lake Outdoor Center near Chelsea, helping complete numerous maintenance projects such as plumbing work, installing new water lines, installing docks, grading beachfronts, winterizing the Center, and much more.

In 2012, Gary received the Volunteer of the Year award from the Center for all his efforts making the Camp a special place for visits by school and youth groups where they learn about hunting, trapping, fishing and conservation.

And Gary has learned you need to be careful about what you plant under power lines and along property lines. "You don't want to plant your trees too close to the property line or your driveway", said Gary. You need to think in terms of the mature size of trees and shrubs when planting so crowding between trees, along driveways and property boundaries don't cause problems as the trees grow and mature", he said.

"I received planting recommendations from the Conservation District when I first started, which has helped in my tree planting efforts," said Gary. "Almost all the trees I have planted have come from the District ever since I started back in 1969," he continued.

Because of his consistent, long-term tree planting efforts, and overall stewardship ethic, the Conservation District is pleased to recognize Gary Moore with the 2012 Tree Conservationist Award.



MAEAP Water Stewardship Program Report

By Amy Gilhouse,
MAEAP Water Stewardship Technician

2012 Conservation Highlights

By Steve Olds, District Conservationist

2012 has proven to be a very busy year with farms moving toward Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) verification. The deliverables required for the MAEAP Grant were 150, and 539 deliverables were accomplished. While my grant has covered Lenawee, Monroe and Washtenaw Counties, I also assisted in Hillsdale and Wayne Counties when requested.

Washtenaw now has MAEAP verifications on the following farms: Cherry Hill Ford Farm, Ypsilanti; DuRussell's Potato Farms, Inc., Manchester; Bruce Haeussler, Manchester ; Horning Farms, LLC, Manchester; Lloyd and David Jedele, Saline; Paul and Connie Marion, Saline; Frank Rochowiak, Milan; Phil Selter, Milan; and Ken and Kathy Siler, Manchester. Of all of the activities involved in my job, the greatest reward is in seeing a farm post their sign that says, "This farm is environmentally verified"!

2012 accomplishments in the three-county and Washtenaw County program area included:

ITEM	3-COUNTY TOTALS	WASHTENAW COUNTY
Farm*A*Systs	20	7
Crop*A*Systs	9	4
Small Farm*A*Systs	2	0
Livestock*A*Systs	3	2
Greenhouse*A*Systs	2	0
MAEAP Farmstead System Verifications	7	1
MAEAP Cropping System Verifications	10	1
MAEAP Livestock System Verifications	4	1

I presented MAEAP at: 2 Soybean Meetings; an MSU Wheat Meeting; the Monroe Ag Council; Washtenaw County Conservation District Annual Meeting; Washtenaw Emergency Management Workshop; and Washtenaw Farmer's Day.

I also assisted with Conservation District displays at the Manchester and Saline Community Fairs, and the Conservation District Spring Tree Sale. It is always exciting to see Washtenaw County residents come to pick up trees for planting.

Well samples were collected from three Washtenaw County sites for the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development water analysis event to monitor the movement of pesticides in the environment.

Through a partnership with Bay Sail of Bay City, Washtenaw community members had an opportunity to

Washtenaw County residents have continued to receive conservation planning and other technical assistance provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), working in collaboration with the Washtenaw County Conservation District (CD). The result has been just over \$1,263,311 of 2008 Farm Bill Conservation Program monies being awarded in Washtenaw County to address soil, water and other existing resource concerns for qualifying participants.

These monies came through the following federal conservation programs; Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, and the Conservation Security Program. In total, 21 new contracts were approved in the county on over 960 acres.

Prior to contracts being selected, applicants had to first have an approved conservation plan developed for their farm by the NRCS and CD planning team. Selections were competitive with factors such as resource protection versus dollars spent being taken into account.

The Seasonal High Tunnel practice continued to be in demand. They were offered for the third year, as part of the three-year EQIP national pilot project. The tunnels, which are similar to hoop houses, are popular with new and beginning, as well as socially disadvantaged farmers who are raising vegetables and other specialty crops. Most of these applicants had farms of less than 10 acres in size. Several were organic, or transitioning to organic.

This year saw more individuals signing up to complete Forest Management Plans (FMP). These were contracted using monies through the EQIP program. As a result, the landowners were able to hire an approved Technical Service Provider from the private sector. The FMP will help them better manage their valuable forest resources.

Of note, Washtenaw County purchase of development rights programs (PDR) benefited from the federal match dollars utilized through the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program. In all, 6 projects were closed this year from prior applications. Additionally, 15 new applications were processed by our local NRCS staff. This program is locally driven. Local sponsoring entities the NRCS worked with included: Ann Arbor Greenbelt, Legacy Land Conservancy and Salem and Webster Townships.

Two successful projects are in their final year. The Southeast Michigan Resource Conservation and Development Council's "2008 Farm Bill Outreach Contribution Agreement" grant, whose purpose was to increase promotion of USDA Farm Bill Conservation Program opportunities for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers in Lenawee, Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne Counties. Also, the "Four Season Farmer Incubator Project" Conservation Innovation Grant with Jeff McCabe, whose purpose was to implement a pilot project that will demonstrate the efficiency of a coordinated effort, at the local level, to attract and train four season farmers. Both grants were competitively selected and funded with NRCS 2008 Farm Bill Program dollars.

This past year, has seen some changes to the NRCS field office team. In June, Tamarra Roseburgh joined the office as a new Soil Conservationist. Quincy Colman (Soil Conservationist) and Jeff Long (Soil Conservation Technician) continue to be productive members of the Team.

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District or NRCS Assistance Provided in 2012

TECHNICAL & OTHER ASSISTANCE	
Businesses, Community Groups & Individuals	887
Forestry & Wildlife Assistance Provided	63
Trees, plants & other items Distributed	43,205
Number of Orders Received	505
Non-Tree Conservation Product Sales: (# of customers / \$ value)	63 / \$3,335
Groundwater Assistance Provided	166
Farm, Crop, Livestock or Other *A*Systs Completed	13
MAEAP Verifications & Re-verifications Completed	3
Agrichemical Handling or Mixing Facilities	3
Comprehensive Nutrient Mgt. Plans: (written / applied)	1 / 1
Conservation Systems Planned: (# plans / # acres)	17 / 969 Ac.
Seasonal High Tunnel Systems	13,878 sq.ft.
Wildlife Habitat Management	162 Ac.
County Financial Assistance Awarded (from all Farm Bill Programs)	\$1,263,311
TECHNICAL REVIEWS AND/OR APPROVALS	
Public Act 116 & Purchase of Development Rights Applications Reviewed	22
State Natural Resources & Environmental Protection Act Public Notices Reviewed	20
NRCS Conservation Plans Reviewed	20
EDUCATIONAL	
Conservation Update Newsletter Issues	1
E-Conservation Update E-mail Issues	12
Educational Materials Distributed	2,132
Presentations and Demonstrations: (# / # of participants)	8 / 101
News Releases or Radio PSAs Distributed	16
District Web Site Home Page Visits	19,983

Financial Statement Washtenaw County Conservation District October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012

REVENUES

County Appropriation	\$ 30,000
Conservation Sales (Trees and native plants; rain barrels and composters; other products and materials)	76,941
Charges for Services	19,043
Interest	349
Other Revenues	1,473
TOTAL REVENUES	\$127,806

EXPENDITURES

Program Expenses (Director expenses; employee expenses; tree and plant sales; rain barrels and composters; other products and materials purchased for resale)	\$116,884
Office Expenses (Audit; bank service charges; credit card fees; dues; equipment repair; insurance; mileage; office supplies; petty cash; postage; sales tax; telephone; and web site)	10,639
Promotion and Education (Annual meeting; annual report; workshops)	2,455
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$129,978
EXCESS OF EXPENDITURES OVER REVENUES	(\$2,172)
BEGINNING FUND BALANCE as of October 1, 2011	\$84,028
ENDING FUND BALANCE as of September 30, 2012	\$81,856

MAEAP Report continued

participate in a Free Water Quality Workshop aboard the Appledore schooner. While my responsibilities for the sail were to schedule three sailing dates, register attendees, provide details and directions, and promote the sails, it was a perfect opportunity to field calls from people who are genuinely interested in local water quality issues.

Both the Washtenaw and Monroe County Farm Bureau's recognized me with their 2012 Ecology Champion Award, which I was presented during their county annual meetings. Farm Bureau has been proactive in encouraging farms to become MAEAP verified.

For more information about the MAEAP Water Stewardship Program, contact Amy at (517) 673-1655.



Conservation Highlights continued

The NRCS and our valued CD partner are looking forward to meeting your conservation planning and practice application needs for the coming year.

For additional information on the 2008 Farm Bill Conservation Programs, please visit <http://www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>, or call us at (734) 761-6722 extension 3.



CONSERVATION UPDATE

Washtenaw County Conservation District
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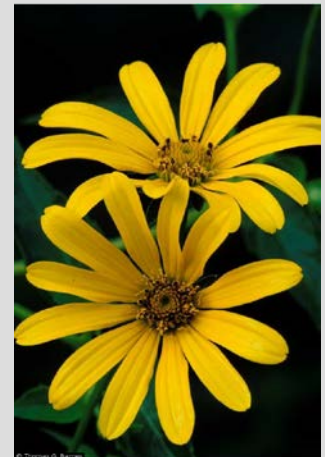
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*District Annual Meeting
January 17, 2013
Make your reservations
today!*