

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Eaton Conservation District

The Mission of the Eaton Conservation District is to promote and encourage cooperation with other individuals, organizations, or agencies in an organized effort to conserve and improve the natural resources in Eaton County

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Eaton Conservation District works with landowners, municipalities, and partner organizations to protect our natural resources for the future.

Enclosed you find the 2015 annual report of the Eaton Conservation District. We want to take this opportunity to celebrate and share with you our successes over the past year.

A few Highlights:

- Agriculture— We worked with 38 farmers to review their farm and look for potential risks to water quality. We look at how they store and manage manure, fertilizers, fuel, and pesticides. We provide recommendations that make sense for the farm business and the environment. This year we worked with farmers to manage 9,078 acres.
- Water quality protection- We hosted the first ever “Celebrate our Rivers” cruise to engage the public and elected officials about our local water quality testing results, projects, and volunteer efforts
- We hosted multiple landowner workshops to learn more about Wildlife habitat and Pollinators, Rivers, Veterans in Agriculture, Cover Crops for Soil Health, Recreation in the Middle Grand River and Native Plants
- Education – we coordinated the statewide Arbor Day celebration, bringing in over 1200 students from the surrounding 5 counties. We also helped plan the Science Adventure camp at Bennett Park that gets kids outside and learning about soil, water, wildlife, and recycling.
- Promote and Partner with USDA Farm Bill Conservation Programs

Thank you for your continued support.

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Board of Directors

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Jennifer Hunnell, Education Coordinator
Sue Spagnuolo, Program Assistant/ Bookkeeper

NRCS Staff

Tim Redder, District Conservationist
Jeremiah Ferguson, Farm Bill Assistant

Introduction

The Eaton Conservation District was created as an entity of state government to develop and carry out programs to reduce erosion, protect water quality and encourage wise land management. In recent years land use patterns have changed dramatically. Pressures on natural resources have continued to mount with erosion problems due to development without proper conservation measures in place as well as other non-point source pollution occurring due to the actions of the many new land users in rural and suburban areas. Priority issues today include land use, urban sprawl, water quality, loss of wetlands, forestry and wildlife management, and nutrient management.

The Eaton Conservation District (ECD) is a legal entity of State Government organized under provisions of Act 297, P.A. 1937, as amended. ECD is a locally controlled resource management agency, created by concerned landowners and administered by publicly elected boards of directors.

Priority issues today include land use, urban sprawl, water quality, loss of wetlands, forestry and wildlife management, and nutrient management

The locally elected five-member board of directors makes all planning decisions regarding the District's programs and activities. The directors hire qualified staff to conduct and carry out the programs and activities. These programs provide technical help, information and awareness to assist people in the District to properly manage their natural resources. There are 78 Conservation Districts that are generally organized along county boundaries.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) is responsible for assisting and coordinating the activities of local districts. The Environmental Stewardship Division of MDARD also has administrative responsibilities to ensure each district is operated and maintained as a governmental entity.

Partners

Conservation Districts partner with many local and statewide groups and organizations. The two main agencies that assist with Conservation Districts are the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. There are also three main non-profit organizations that support Districts: The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, the Michigan Association of Conservation District Employees and the National Association of Conservation Districts. ECD partners with many local and regional organizations as well: Resource Conservation and Development, Michigan State University Extension, Eaton County Parks, Pheasants Forever, Quality Deer Management Association, Center for Regional Food Systems, Great Lakes Bay Sail, Michigan Food and Farming Systems, US Fish and Wildlife Service, County Schools and Tri-County Regional Planning.

Funding

District funding sources include state appropriations, county and other governmental appropriations, federal and state grants, and other locally initiated and conducted fund raising activities. Conservation District directors are responsible for developing funding sources for the operation of the Conservation District and for the conduct of programs focused on solving resource issues.

FY 2015 Financial Report	
INCOME	
Deferred Income	61,000
Federal Grants	30,000
Contributions from Local Units	38,891
State Grants	134,375
Charges for Services	1,900
Interest and Rentals	250
Tree Sale	40,100
Other Revenue	14,159
Total Income	320,675
EXPENSE	
281 Operations	96,000
282 MWSP Agricultural	65,000
289 Arbor Day	53,300
294 Tree Sale	21,000
299 MWSP Website	36,375
Impact Grant	40,000
CMI Monitoring	9,000
Total Expenses	320,675

Land Use

ECD recognizes the importance of land use patterns on protecting natural resources. ECD is dedicated to serving as a resource for landowners and local planning officials.

Greening Mid Michigan

The Greening Mid-Michigan Project is a local effort to develop and implement a vision for green space and conservation efforts. As a part of this effort, PSA videos have been created to promote conservation practices. These will be promoted to land use planners, elected officials, and general public. Four of the videos spotlight conservation district projects.

This year, the Greening Mid Michigan committee partnered to host the 3rd annual Ultimate Mid-Michigan Bus Tour. The theme of the tour was “Our Farmland and Our Cities: Shaping our Economy & Livelihood”. Participants visited 10 sites throughout Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties including: The Lonier Farm, Fitzgerald Park, ALIVE, Webster Farms, and more. Eaton Conservation District staff attended to promote the MAEAP verified farms, explain the types of practices that MAEAP requires, and discuss water quality initiatives in the region.



3rd Annual Ultimate Mid Michigan Bus Tour: stop at MAEAP verified Lonier Farm

Qualified Forest Property Program

The Qualified Forest Property Program (QFP) is administered by the Michigan Department of Agriculture Rural Development (MDARD) with technical assistance provided by local Conservation Districts. ECD has promoted the new opportunities to landowners through events, news releases, and one-on-one assistance. In 2015, ECD reviewed and approved one application for 80 acres in Bellevue Township for the QFP Program.

Farmland Preservation

ECD staff serve on the Eaton County Farmland Preservation Board and review and approve PA 116 applications for farmland agreement. In 2015, the board of directors reviewed and approved eight applications for PA 116 for 744.76 acres and approved one termination application.

ECD is co-located with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. As part of this partnership, ECD staff provide outreach and technical assistance to landowners to encourage conservation practices and participation with Farm Bill conservation programs.

	Qualified Forestry Program	PA 116	Site Plans/ Conditional Use Permits	MDEQ Wetland Permits
# of applications	1	8	34	5
# of acres	80	744.76	-	-

Water Quality & Quantity

The Eaton Conservation District is dedicated to protecting water quality and quantity in Eaton County. Multiple programs focus on identifying and reducing risks to protect our waterways. ECD serves on planning committees for the Middle Grand River Watershed, Thornapple River Watershed Committee, and Battle Creek Restoration Project.

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)

MAEAP is an innovative, proactive program that helps farms of all sizes and all commodities voluntarily prevent or minimize agricultural pollution risks. MAEAP teaches farmers how to identify and prevent environmental risks and work to comply with state and federal environmental regulations. Farmers who successfully complete the three phases of a MAEAP system are rewarded by becoming verified in that system. Our local program is made possible by a Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development grant administered by the Eaton Conservation District that covers Eaton and Ingham Counties.

In 2015, District staff worked with 38 land owners to complete 54 environmental risk assessments, discuss best management practices and develop emergency plans on farms. Also there were 30 MAEAP verifications/reverifications and 467 risk reductions to reduce point and nonpoint source pollution. Staff worked directly with producers to review management practices

Eaton/Ingham MAEAP SNAPSHOT	
Landowners	38
Farm Environmental Risk Assessments	54
Emergency plans (new and updated)	23
MAEAP verifications/reverifications	30
Pollution Prevention Practices	467
Acres managed	9,078
Wells sampled for nitrates and bacteria	24
CleanSweep collection of unwanted pesticides	4,826 lbs

covering 9,078 acres of farm land in Eaton and Ingham counties. This included revising and creating drift management plans, pesticide inventories, 9 manure management plans (3 revisions of existing plans), 23 farm emergency plans, and mapping 9,078 acres of crop and pastureland to highlight sensitive areas and monitor erosion from soil loss. Of the 24 wells that staff monitored for nitrates and

bacteria, one well was found to have bacterial contamination after significant flooding this spring. Staff worked with the well owner, local partners and the Barry-Eaton Department of Environmental Health to provide technical resources for the well owner.

Eaton County Farm Bureau recognized Jen Silveri, ECD MAEAP Technician, with their 2015 Educator of The Year Award. This year she worked closely with Eaton County Farm Bureau to help create a pollinator exhibit at the circle of life barn during the Eaton County Fair to replace the chickens that were banned as a result of avian influenza. She also worked closely with Eaton Farm Bureau staff to educate farmers during the Williams Farm Machinery Farm Safety Day and the Conservation Innovation Field Day.

Silveri was also recognized on a state wide level by Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development with the MAEAP Relentless Positive Actions Award. Recipients seek new ways to engage district partners, seek collaborative relationships, and promote the efforts of their district. They also contribute positively to the MAEAP program, not only fulfilling grant requirements, but seeking new strategic partnerships and collaborations, and routinely integrating the MAEAP into their programmatic and district activities. Recipients are individuals who work diligently to improve environmental performance, profitability and the livelihood of farms they work with via the MAEAP program.



Middle Grand River Watershed Plan

The Middle Grand River Watershed Management Plan was approved by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in spring 2015! This means communities located in the Middle Grand River Watershed are now eligible to apply for funding under the Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI) Nonpoint Source Pollution Control program and the federal Section 319 program. ECD will be applying for funds through both of these programs.

The creation of the Middle Grand River Watershed Management Plan is a reflection of collaboration from several organizations and community members. We worked hard to create a plan focused on reducing nonpoint source pollution from E.coli sources. The plan emphasizes the implementation of best management practices, engaging rural residential, agricultural, and urban audiences in information and education strategies, and continued water monitoring.

There couldn't be a better time than right now to protect and promote our region's greatest asset, water. Moving forward, there is tremendous opportunity for us to leverage existing talent and resources. This is an exciting time for the region! We are in a unique position to capitalize on all of the existing efforts to create a unified voice, thus facilitating a larger positive impact.



Impacting our Water

Through an Impact grant from the Capital Region Community Foundation, ECD facilitated a capacity building effort to bring together energy and resources of the stakeholders and the public in the Middle Grand River Watershed. This effort included internal brainstorming, public engagement surveys, board member retreat, development of an MGROW strategic plan, Pollution Isn't Pretty marketing, Hosting financial management and outreach trainings and promotion at paddling and farmers market events. See below for some of the great projects made possible through this initiative.

REACH Storm Drain Artwork Project

This year we partnered with REACH Art Studio for a great public artwork project. Every year REACH Studio Art Center's Teen Open Studio (TOS), creates three Community Art Projects (CAPS). Twenty-three teens reviewed over a dozen Lansing storm drains and took on four sites. Split into four teams, the teens spread storm drain awareness to various locations across the city. Sites include: Adado Riverfront Park, Lansing City Market, Sir Pizza in Old Town and a drain across the street from REACH on S. Washington Ave.

The Spring CAPS Storm Drain Awareness project is a partnership with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, the Eaton Conservation District, the Greater Lansing Regional Committee, and the City of Lansing. The goal of the project is public education as it applies to stormwater and pollution prevention; and serves to fulfill a requirement of the City's NPDES Stormwater Permit. A talented team of guest artists and staff co-leading the process and documentation include: painter/muralists Kaitlyn Granger and Abbey Hoffman, videographer Brad Scott shooting a mini-documentary working alongside Coordinator Tabor Vits and Program Director Joy Baldwin.



Storm Drain artwork educates the public on the connection to our rivers

Celebrate Our Rivers

On September 17th, Eaton Conservation District hosted a Cruise on the Michigan Princess Riverboat to celebrate all the positive things going on with our local rivers. The Celebrate Our Rivers event had over 125 people attend to learn about great things going on in the effort to keep our rivers clean. Attendees learned about conservation efforts, water quality, invasive species, recreation opportunities and much more.

Partners included: Eaton, Clinton, Ingham and Ionia Conservation Districts, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Greater Lansing Regional Committee for Stormwater Management, MSU Institute of Water Research, Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council, Michigan Food and Farming Systems, Michigan Grand River Organization of Watersheds, River Town Adventures, and more!



Andrea Stay provides an overview of water sampling efforts in Mid-Michigan

Water Words that Work Training Series

This year ECD was able to host a variety of trainings for our staff and partners to increase our regional impact on water quality. The training sessions were held in a series of 4 week webinars for each topic. The three series included “Water Words that Work”- a training to improve communications through audience targeting, storytelling, and avoiding jargon, “More than a Message” planning and evaluating an environmental education campaign, and “Perfect Outreach Projects” an overview of effective project management techniques. These trainings were open to Conservation District staff, watershed organizations, nature centers staff, nonprofit staff, and volunteers. According to one of the attendees: “This training was fantastic. We have watershed projects where we have funding to cost share for cover crops, buffer strips, and drainage tile management. But really, that is an outreach project to market the practices to the farmers in a way that is useful to them.”

Science Adventure Camp

This year was the 3rd year of the Science Adventure Camp, held at Bennett Park in Charlotte. This event invites 4th and 5th graders to a weeklong camp to get excited about Science. Presenters engage students with hands-on experiments and take-home projects. This year’s topics included river hydrology, germs, rocks and fossils, and students were able to make their own lava lamps and air fresheners. ECD partners with Eaton County Resource Recovery, the City of Charlotte, and local community volunteers to pull off this fun week.

This year ECD staff used a Stream Table for their presentation. The stream table was a great addition to the program, the kids were able to learn, make predictions, and adapt their river design. Each of our 8 education sessions lasted 40 minutes. We started by talking about soil types, erosion, and deposition and students felt loam, clay and sandy soil samples. We ran three cycles of the stream table – one with directions to work as a team and create a river, the second round we talked about where erosion had occurred and how to prevent it, and the third round we tried to slow down the river as much as we could (meanderings, dams, structures). This was especially timely because it took place a few days following the large rainfall storm on June 22nd. We talked about culverts, flow capacity, and roads washing out.



Science Camp Attendees learn about fingerprinting



Students design their river

Michigan Water Stewardship Program Residential Website

Through a grant with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, ECD oversees promotion and updating/editing for a statewide water quality website called the Michigan Water Stewardship Program (MWSP), which can be found at www.miwaterstewardship.org. The website includes learning games for kids, lesson plans and activities for teachers, tools and tips for homeowners, an online training program to help residents become experts in environmental topics, and much more.

In 2015 we continued promotional efforts in order to expand usage and awareness of the site. This year's efforts resulted in an increase of over 10,000 people visiting the site, 28,997 visitors as of October 31, 2015. Since the MWSP website launched in 2011, a grand total of 71,817 people worldwide have used the site, with every state in the U.S. participating. One of the most popular features of the site is the Virtual Water Cycle Model. This tool provides students with a visual, animated, interactive view of the water cycle. By exploring different parts of the model, users can see how their actions both above and below the ground can impact our water.



On the MWSP website, visitors can play games such as “Down the Drain you Go” to learn about how their choices affect water quality.

Wildlife and Habitat

Creating Habitat for wildlife is a core goal of many district and USDA NRCS programs. ECD promotes habitat management through annual tree sales, native plant sales, workshop, information, newsletters, and opportunities. We provide trees and educational trunks to local schools to learn more about natural resources. Identifying and managing invasive species is a growing concern for Michigan, and ECD is pursuing grant funding to expand our programming in this area.

Michigan Arbor Day Program

The Michigan Arbor Day program is run out of the ECD office and funded by a grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. This program hosts the State Arbor Day Celebration each year at Potter Park Zoo in Lansing. We invite second and third grade classes from Ingham, Eaton, Clinton, Ionia, Jackson, and Shiawassee counties to attend. Students learn about a wide range of topics, including soils, water, energy, trees, and wildlife. At the 2015 Celebration we had 49 classes from 21 different schools participate (1,146 students).

Another major component of the Arbor Day program is tree plantings. We accomplish this through our Go Green Youth Challenge Tree Planting Grant program as well as additional sponsorships and partnerships. This year, we were able to complete four community tree plantings totaling 85 trees. Hartland Township and Grand Ledge High School were awarded Go Green Youth Challenge Tree Planting Grants for \$2,000 each. Hartland Twp. will use this grant to plant trees in a newly created public park, while Grand Ledge High School will use it to create a windbreak to shield their athletic fields. The other two tree plantings were carried out with help from Michigan State University Federal Credit Union (MSUFCU). MSUFCU has donated both time and money toward planting trees in the mid-Michigan area since 2011. This spring we planted nine sargent crabapples in Nancy Moore Park in Meridian Township and eight red maples in Maple Grove Cemetery in Mason. We would like to thank all of the volunteers from MSUFCU who helped make these plantings possible.



Getting down and dirty. MSUFCU helps plant trees through the Go Green Challenge Partnership



This year ECD's program was honored to receive the Arbor Day Celebration Award from the national Arbor Day Foundation. This award is presented to **one** celebration in the United States that best represents the spirit of the tree planter's holiday created by J. Sterling Morton in 1872. Our Program Coordinator, Jennifer Hunnell, traveled to Nebraska City, Nebraska on April 24th to accept the award during the Foundation's award ceremony weekend. Twelve other awards were given to individuals and organizations from around the country for their outstanding contributions to tree planting, conservation, stewardship, and community involvement. It was incredible to see what other organizations were doing to promote and protect trees. The Eaton Conservation District would like to thank the Arbor Day Foundation for choosing our program to be among these amazing award recipients this year.

The Go Green Youth Challenge is a student contest that raises money to plant trees. The Go Green Youth Challenge Creative Writing Contest was added to this program in 2013. This year, K-12 students were encouraged to use their imaginations to write to the theme, "If you were a tree, which tree would you be and why." First place winners received an award to plant a tree at their school in addition to other prizes. Since 2011, the Go Green Youth Challenge program has planted 1,013 trees across Michigan!

Tree & Native Plant Sales

The Spring Tree/Shrub Sale and Native Plant sales continue to be a success. Total, in 2015, ECD sold just over 31,132 trees and shrubs at low-cost to encourage habitat. Some of our species are available every year (examples: White spruce, Sugar maple, Dogwoods and Black walnut) while we rotate new species to increase diversity. Some of the special offerings this year were Sassafras, Spicebush, Catalpa, Pond Packets, and Empress Plum. Information about the habitat and water quality benefits of each species is included on our website and in the order catalog. We also work with landowners that are working on USDA Conservation Habitat installations or want to target creating habitat for a species (turkeys, pheasants, etc). In June, we partnered with the Dimondale Farmers Market for our Native Plant Sale Fundraiser. ECD sold 576 perennial plants (such as Trillium, Black-eyed susans, Big blue stem). This sale is a great opportunity to learn more about the benefits of native plants. Plants are sold individually, or in special purpose gardens such as a raingarden or hummingbird garden.

Hunter Access Program

ECD continued the partnership with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to assist landowners in the Hunter Access Program (HAP) and monitor the contract agreements. This provides hunting access to the public and provides a rental payment to the landowner. The two HAP sites in Eaton County have reverted to private rental contracts. We are currently seeking new enrollments for this program. Depending on habitat quality and types of hunting allowed, the program pays up to \$25/acre enrolled in the program.



Prescribed burns are one way to increase habitat value. This site is a warm season prairie that is burned regularly to remove invasive species and woody plants.

Habitat Promotion

Every March, ECD staff hosts the annual wildlife workshop with speakers from USDA NRCS, MDNR, Pheasants Forever, Quality Deer Management, and Ducks Unlimited. This provides the public with the opportunity to learn about a variety of programs and activities. This year's guest speaker was Kip Miller from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. He talked about the life cycles of honeybees and why pollinators are so important.

Pheasants Forever partners with ECD to rent out a Truax no-till drill for native grass plantings. This drill rents for \$12/ acre and is available by calling the office. The District also rents out tree planters for planting high quantities of seedlings.

ECD partners on several community wildflower plantings, including: Maple Valley Conservation Area, Charlotte Raingarden, ALIVE's PRESERVE project, General Motors LDT Garden, and more. These sites serve to increase pollinator habitat, protect water quality, and be demonstration sites for landowners. This spring, ALIVE worked with ECD and the Charlotte Fire Department to conduct a prescribed burn on the habitat. This was used as a training exercise for the Fire Department. ALIVE also developed walking trails with educational signage to encourage people to stroll through the habitat.



Monarch Butterfly enjoying the native plants at ALIVE

Organization Sustainability

In order to be a sustainable organization, ECD has identified the following strategies: 1) Recruit and train board members, 2) Provide continuing education for staff, 3) Increase and diversify funding sources, 4) Provide opportunities for volunteer involvement, and 5) Engage stakeholders.

These 5 core strategies are crucial to the strength of our organization. In 2015, staff and board members attended trainings on the Food Safety Modernization Act, Grazing, Forestry Habitat and Wetland assistance, Michigan Family Farms conference, Great Lakes Fruits and Vegetable Expo, Invasive Species Management, CPR, Accounting, Leadership, and Program Evaluation. Board and staff continue to seek additional and diverse funding mechanisms including tree and material sales, foundation and local funding support, State and Federal Grants, and partnerships with businesses.

Strengthened USDA NRCS Partnership and Veteran Focus

This year ECD staff work very closely with USDA in to promote existing services to beginning farmers and Farmer Veterans in Eaton County. Together USDA and ECD staff delivered targeted outreach to these producers to promote the creation of farm Conservation Plans and encourage them to utilize resources available from both organizations to help these new farmers get their operation started off on the right foot for environmental compliance. They worked together to identify special USDA funding initiatives to increase the likelihood of these operations gaining access to Farm Bill funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives program or EQIP. Additional funding and resource opportunities with partners, such as the Farmer Veteran Coalition and the MIFFS Veterans in Ag Network, were identified and promoted to producers looking for additional ways to improve natural resources conservation on the farm. ECD is looking forward to continuing this strategy in the upcoming year to assist these producers on their path to sustainability.



The theme of this year's January annual meeting was "Promoting Veterans in Agriculture". We hosted a screening of the film "Ground Operations: from battlefield to farmfield" followed by a speaker panel. The speaker panel was composed of Representative Tom Barrett, Kali Fox from Senator Stabenow's Office, Dylan Thomas – Iraqi veteran and beginning farmer, Ben Sommers – Lansing Roots Incubator Farm, and Leslie Melvin – Helping our Heroes and MANNA Acres. This event was well attended, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Above all else, attendees enjoyed hearing the personal story of Dylan Thomas, a recent veteran, his transition and what farming meant to him. He had the crowd laughing and crying.



Collaboration

ECD worked closely with the Restore the Rapids to Eaton Rapids Project to secure funding from the DNR Dam Management Program, REO Foundation, and support their efforts at removing a dam to increase river connectivity, habitat, and recreation opportunities. This dam removal and river restoration will take place in 2016 thanks to a 5 year fundraising effort.

ECD Staff serve on a multitude of planning committees, including: MAEAP Technical Advisory Committee, Groundwater Technical Advisory Committee, Charlotte Wellhead Protection Team, Mid Michigan Stewardship Network (Invasive Species). This year ECD staff began serving as members of the MAEAP Training Committee and the MAEAP on Farm Food Safety Committee. Through these roles we partnered with other Conservation Districts and MDARD staff to improve trainings offered to MAEAP technicians statewide and hybridize MAEAP on Farm Risk assessments tools to highlight the overlap of best practices for On Farm Food Safety with those for water quality and conservation of natural resources. This work will continue throughout 2016 with the goal of creating new tools that other MAEAP technicians will be trained to use with fruit and vegetable farms preparing to adopt new regulations under the Food Safety and Modernization Act.

Volunteers

Volunteers are a vital part of our programs throughout the year. ECD is always looking for individuals and groups to help. This year volunteers helped at the following events: tree plantings, Arbor Day, County Fair, weeding the raingardens, workshops, science adventure camp, river clean-ups, mailing postcards, sorting trees, mulching trails, collecting silent auction items, serving as a board member, and many more. We had volunteers ranging from 8 years old to in their 80s. Thank you so much for your continued support and involvement in our programs.

**2015 VOLUNTEER
CONTRIBUTION**
76 EVENTS
@ 1455 HOURS
WORTH \$33,566.85
**INDEPENDENT SECTOR CONSULTANTS VALUE*

Outreach

Reaching stakeholders through a variety of events and outreach is important to the Conservation District. ECD continues to utilize the internet to inform the public and promote programs through our website, facebook, twitter, and e-newsletters. Our monthly e-newsletter subscribers increased from 1,077 to 1,590 (up 32%) people in 2015. The Michigan Arbor Day Alliance program also produces two e-newsletters each month, reaching an additional 237 people. One newsletter specifically targets Michigan's educators and contains events, trainings, funding opportunities, and fun hands-on activities to use in their classrooms. The Conservation District's website at www.eatoncd.org continues to be a great resource, with over 4,200 users and 11,091 (up 29%) page views this year. The most popular pages are the topics of plant sales, programs, announcements and science adventure camp.

Newsletters, events, and workshops are a great opportunity to educate the public about wildlife habitat and invasive species. In 2015, ECD sent 3 paper newsletters, 13 e-newsletters, and published over 28 news releases. We partnered to help organize the Charlotte River Conservation Day and Thornapple River Clean-ups and with volunteers help pick up trash, planted trees, and pulled invasive species.



NRCS Accomplishments

Tim Redder, District Conservationist

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Eaton County had a successful year in 2015 and worked with numerous agricultural producers and landowners throughout the county helping address natural resource related concerns. We had several new program participants and have seen a growth in the number of beginning farmers interested in starting out with a conservation plan that helps assist with developing their operation.

The commonly used programs available are the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Having a Conservation Plan developed is the first step to then determine what programs are available to help implement and follow the plan. Stop in to get more information on how one of these programs may benefit your farm.



Cover Crop Planting in Benton Twp one week after planting. Cover Crops help manage soil fertility, soil quality, erosion, pests, weeds, biodiversity, and wildlife



Same planting five weeks later. This is a mix of Sorghum/sudan grass, tillage radish and buckwheat

NRCS has worked with a diverse group of landowners from across the county to address natural resource concerns on different land uses such as: pasture, cropland, grassland, forestland and farm headquarters. Below is a list of the practices that were completed by landowners in Eaton County with assistance from NRCS in FY 2015:

Grazing Practices	Cropland Practices	Farm Headquarter Practices	Wildlife Habitat Practices
Grazing Plans written (Qty 2)	Nutrient Management (2,558 acres)	Mortality Composting Facility (Qty 1)	Noxious Weed control
Fence	Pest Management (650 acres)	Farmstead Energy Improvement (Qty 3)	Tree Planting (180 acres)
Rotational Grazing (36 acres)	Cover Crop (281 acres)	Seasonal High Tunnel (Hoop House) (Qty 1)	Forest Management Plans written (Qty 4)
Watering Facilities		Microirrigation Installation (Qty 1)	Forest Stand Improvement (103 acres)
Pipeline		Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans written (Qty 1)	
Pasture/Hayland seeding			

The Eaton Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service would like to thank all the landowners in Eaton County who have applied conservation practices either on their own or through a program to help protect and sustain our natural resources. For more information on the above conservation practices or conservation programs that are available, please call the office at (517) 543-1512, ext. 3.