



Washtenaw County Conservation District

OCTOBER 2019

Washtenaw County Conservation District Seeks a Millage on the August 4th Primary Ballot

By Megan DeLeeuw

In 2020 the Washtenaw County Conservation District (WCCD) will celebrate our 72nd year of serving Washtenaw County residents with protecting and managing their natural resources. Over these many decades of critical conservation work, the Conservation District has served as a bridge between residents/landowners and the education, resources and technical assistance they require in order to implement real conservation on the ground. As our resource concerns in the County have evolved over time, so has the work and priorities of the WCCD. In the most recent decade, we have been vastly underfunded which has restricted our ability to serve residents. It is because of this need that we seek assistance from our County Commissioners to place a millage on the ballot on our behalf.

At a County Commissioner working session On October 10th, the WCCD formally requested that the Washtenaw County Commissioners pass a resolution to place a millage on behalf of the WCCD on the August 4th primary ballot. The millage requested would be at a rate of .019 mil per \$1,000 taxable value. This would generate an estimated total of \$316,000 per year for a duration of six years. A single household at \$100,000 assessed value would pay \$1.90 per year, a property at \$1,000,000 assessed value would pay \$20.00. Each resident

Our Staff and Board Directors

Matt Koenn, Chair

Jill Dohner, Vice-Chair

Howard Sias, Treasurer

Julianne Chard, Secretary

Don Rentschler, Director

Megan DeLeeuw, District
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would chip in to pay for critical conservation work across the entire county.

Why is the WCCD now seeking a millage? As a local arm of State government, the WCCD once had reliable general funds from the State of Michigan that allowed us to develop our extensive resource distributions (aka. Tree Sale), provide technical assistance and in-depth educational opportunities to farmers and residents alike. Conservation Districts across Michigan lost this sustainable funding in the mid-2000's when it was cut from the general budget by the Granholm administration. Since this time, the WCCD has relied on a patchwork of one State grant, \$30,000 in County support and revenue generated from sales. Our organizational capacity has suffered as a result and are unable to meet the growing and evolving demands of our residents.

Thirteen out of seventy five Conservation Districts in Michigan in recent years have worked with their County Commissioners to successfully place millages on the ballot. These thirteen have passed and now are able to provide expanded resources and services to their County residents. Grand Traverse County, Van Buren

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2019 Well Water Education in Salem By Nick Machinski

The Washtenaw County Conservation District (WCCD) has partnered with students from Eastern Michigan University's Creative Scientific Inquiry Experience program (CSIE) to host a drinking well water education event for nitrate, pH, conductivity and more on November 2, 2019 from 8am to 4pm. If you have questions concerning well water quality, groundwater management or potential contaminants in groundwater this event is for you! The event is sponsored by the Washtenaw County Conservation District and the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). In addition, there will be free well water screenings for those interested. There is no fee to participants for this service.

Bring your samples to: 9600 Six Mile Rd. Salem, MI 48175

How much water to bring: 6-8oz

The testing is for private drinking water wells only. Public water supplies are tested regularly. Please do not bring samples from public water supplies or non-drinking water sources. Only drinking water well samples will be tested. You do not have to use a special bottle for this screening. Any small clean jar will work.

Please follow the directions below to sample your well. Collect samples just before getting them to the sample drop-off. Samples must be less than 48 hours old for a valid re-

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County, Kalkaska and Antrim are all examples of Counties that have had successful Conservation District millages. As funding from the State of Michigan has become unreliable, residents from these counties have stood up to support conservation resources, education and technical assistance where they live.

With this solid precedent of other CDs across the State successfully placing millages on their local ballots, we would like to allow Washtenaw residents the choice to support the impactful conservation work in their County. Washtenaw County residents value preservation of natural and agricultural lands and have shown that support through renewed millages over the years. Placing a small WCCD millage on the ballot will allow residents to choose whether or not to expand the capacity of the WCCD in assisting residents/landowners with identifying resource concerns, connecting to resources and implementing solutions on the ground.

We have been working hard utilizing what little resources we have had for 72 years. The WCCD has distributed over 7.1 million trees, shrubs and native plants since 1950, resulting in over 154,584 metric tons of CO2 removed from the atmosphere. In 2018 alone we assisted with 1,691 acres on conservation planning, and approved applications for 421 acres of farmland to be preserved through the State of Michigan PA116 program. In 2019 our Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) reached over 85 verifications on 5,191 acres of land in the County, *reducing environmental concerns and pollution on each of those acres*. In 2019 we offered a Backyard Conservation Education series and a Conservation Ag Field Day to educate landowners at all scales on various conservation practices from backyard beekeeping to rotational grazing. We also completed a county wide resource assessment in 2016 highlighting resource concerns of Washtenaw residents/landowners, the next assessment is planned for 2021.

Natural resources do not acknowledge property boundaries and so our water, air, land, soils are truly owned by all residents in the county. Invasive species unmanaged can easily spread, water overloaded with nutrients from runoff end up in our shared waterways and a shifting climate impacts each of our daily lives. As residents of this County, we ask that you let your County Commissioner know how the Conservation District has assisted you over the years or what services you hope we can offer. As County Commissioners decide which millages will be placed on the August 4th 2020 ballot, we ask that they consider a millage for the Washtenaw County Conservation District.

Not sure who your Commissioner is? Visit: www.washtenaw.org/202/Board-of-Commissioners

Questions or interested in helping with this effort? Contact me at megan.deleeuw@macd.org or 734.205.1219

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Fill out the water Sample Information Sheet (attached).

Pick a tap that supplies water that has not run through any treatment devices (water softener, carbon filter, etc.). An outdoor faucet often works well.

Run the water for 20-30 minutes before collecting the sample. This will give the pump time to flush the water pressure tank and plumbing so you can collect a valid sample. Disconnect any hoses before collecting the sample; do not sample through a hose. Rinse the sample bottle and lid thoroughly in the water to be sampled; then fill and cap the bottle.

Label the bottle clearly with your name, the sampling date, and the well name (cottage well, Mom's well, etc.) using a water proof pen.

Keep the sample dark and cold (on ice or refrigerated) until it is dropped off.

All results are confidential. You will be mailed a copy of your results in 6 to 8 weeks, with information about what to do if the concentration of nitrate or nitrite is too high.

Be sure to fill out the Sample Information Sheet (on the back of this document) completely and bring it with your water sample to the drop-off. We need a complete mailing address to get your results back to you. Please call the Washtenaw County Conservation District at (734) 761-8789, or from your local MAEAP stewardship technician at (734) 761-8789 ext. 1218 for any questions.

This program is sponsored by the Washtenaw County Conservation District, the MAEAP Water Stewardship Program, Eastern Michigan University, Augusta Township, and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. It is funded through the Michigan Groundwater and Freshwater Protection Act, the MDARD, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



In My Backyard By Nick Machinski

How to practice responsible Land Management no matter the characteristics of your property.

Part 1: Intro and Observation

I stated last month that after Algal Blooms and Lake Erie, I wouldn't be beginning any new series anytime soon. And that wasn't that I had a lack of ideas, I have several topics to write about. It was more that I couldn't make up my mind. These articles take some in-depth research to complete and of course, I like to cite my sources.

However, as I was walking around my backyard, noticing the flowers waning and the leaves changing color, I decided I couldn't wait. I knew what topic I wanted to do.

My yard is new to me. My family and I moved into our Chelsea home in early August and like any other couple that moves into a new space, there are things we will keep the same and things we will change. The yard is something I tend to have the freedom to do what I want with (to a point), and needless to say, there are some changes I'd like to make. But this series isn't going to be a blog about my yard and what projects I'm doing.

The Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) has a system where landowners can receive recognition by the state for the excellent management they are performing on their land. Part of the requirement is having a Land Management Plan (LMP). I co-write this with the landowner, as it contains the goals the landowner has for their property as well as what management techniques they will use to achieve those goals. However, I also do quite a bit of analysis of the property. What soils are there? What does that mean for plant species? What are the unique habitats in the landscape? What did the land used to look like? Etc. This is all taken down, inventoried, mapped and put into the LMP.

In this series, I will be telling you the tools of my trade. What tools to use and how to use these tools to do a proper analysis of your property. The great part about this is that what I will share is applicable to property of every size and shape. Thus, I can use my yard as an example as we go through these steps.

And I use the term "steps" loosely. There are not any hard and fast rules on what I will share or the order that you perform them. I am going in an order that makes the most sense to me and has worked for many of the landowners that I have worked with. So, with this long introduction out of the way, let's get started.

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Observing

Observing is the first thing I do when I come to a site. What plant life is there? What animal life is present? Where does water go? What sounds do I hear? What smells are there? Is there plenty of light? The answers to these questions tell you what the current state of your property really is. It tells you what it is currently capable of. This is invaluable when thinking about what you'd like to see in the landscape.

Observing a site is never a one-time thing. Wildlife comes and goes depending on the season. Flowers bloom at different times. However, we all know that there are times of the year when it is more favorable to be outside than others. Right now is one of those times. It's not freezing yet, and nor is it blistering hot. Plus, there are still leaves on many of the trees and plants meaning that you can identify what you have. At the same time, observe, what animals are coming into your property, including any signs of them.

But don't forget your neighbor's property too! Depending on the proximity of your neighbors, many of the wildlife that comes into their property likely visits yours as well.

Finally, take note of what you observe. Either jot them down in a notebook, sketch on a pad, enter them into a computer or take pictures. All of these are great ways to remember what you observed and provide a way for you to refer back to them later.

My Observations

Here are some of my observations I have made about my yard and the surrounding landscape.

- 3 Red Maples
- 2 Japanese Maples (non-native)
- 1 Other Maple (need Identification)
- Rabbits (scat)
- Blue Jays (they love my neighbor's acorns, but are seen in the maples from time to time)
- Squirrels (neighbor's yard)
- Mums, Purple Cone Flowers, Black-eyed Susan's, Roses, Day Lilies, several other plants that need identifying.
- 1 Burning Bush (non-native, possibly invasive)
- Arborvitae

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Learn How to Plant and Maintain Healthy Trees

By Megan DeLeeuw

The Washtenaw County Conservation District (WCCD) is hosting a workshop on Planting and Maintaining Trees as part of the Backyard Conservation Education Series on Tuesday, October 22nd from 5-6:30 PM. Workshop will be outdoors at 8778 Eiseman Rd, Manchester, MI 48158.

Topics will include: site selection and preparation, proper planting techniques, what to look for in the first year of growth and how to care for your trees for long-term health. Focus will be on trees for conservation purposes (wildlife habitat, wind barrier, soil erosion reduction, naturalization, reforestation).

Presenting with me will be Ivich Fraser, Entomologist with the U.S. Forest Service and hosted by Vic Mann, WCCD "Tree Conservationist of the Year 2017" award winner. Cost is \$10 per person and can be paid at the workshop. RSVP by me at megan.deleeuw@macd.org or 734.205.1219.

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- Sparrows 1 Red bud
- A few other young conifers, one in bad shape 1 Aspen
- 2 Birch trees Grasses (need Identification)
- Deer (Based on fenced gardens nearby and one I saw bounding away on a nearby street)

My observation list isn't exhaustive, mostly because of the space limit here, but also because observations are ever changing. You will constantly find new plants, animals and insects entering your property. The important thing is to get started in making observations around your own place. In doing so, you will become more aware of the natural world around you and the changes that are going on. It will also allow you to make better decisions when planning out different spaces on your property.

So, observe what is going on in your property and keep this going as the seasons change. Next time, I'll show teach you a little about taking an even wider view of your property to really see how your property fits in the surrounding landscape and how that might inform your goals and management decisions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Planting & Maintaining Trees Workshop

Tuesday, October 22nd

8778 Eiseman Rd, Manchester

5-6:30 PM, Cost \$10 , RSVP

Join us for hands-on experience learning about site selection, site preparation, proper planting techniques, what to look for in the first year of growth and how to care for your trees for long-term health. Featuring Ivich Fraser, U.S. Forest Service Entomologist. Hosted by Vic Mann, WCCD "Tree Conservationist of the Year 2017" award winner!

Join us to celebrate 72 years of Conservation Work in Washtenaw County!

Keynote: Gabriela Quinlan, PhD candidate at MSU on Michigan's Native Bees

Thursday, January 16th at 6:30 PM.

5055 Ann Arbor-Saline Rd, Ann Arbor, MI

Catered dinner and door prizes. Cost is \$12 per person. RSVP.

Event will include a keynote presentation on Michigan's Native Bees, an overview the Washtenaw County Conservation District 2019 Annual Report, local conservation awards ceremony and door prize drawing. Please contact Megan DeLeeuw to RSVP: megan.deleeuw@macd.org 734.761.6721

A Blast from the Past: 1969 Detroit News Article highlighting WCCD and MSU Countywide Soil Survey

Dream house—or nightmare?

'Thumbprint' can warn of flood

YPSILANTI — It was just the spot they had been looking for. An acre of land on a slight rise above a creek and small pond, handy to Ann Arbor. The \$40,000 house they planned to build had taken a lot of saving and planning, but now they would have the right location for it.

This was 1964, a nice year to build, they thought, and so did about 20 other families. But 1964 was a very dry year, a record dry, and there wasn't much water in the ground.

The house was built and in the next five years this couple and five others were to find out what it's like to run a sump pump night and day, summer and winter, to keep the basement of your "dream house" from filling with backed up water.

WHAT HAPPENED to this family, and what has happened to many more just like them, could have been prevented if they had known the signs to read in the dirt walls of the excavation

for their basement. For there, indelibly printed in the soil, is a record of the true picture of things . . . the thumbprints of water tables old and new.

Right now, in Washtenaw County, and in other counties such as Gratiot, Clare, Monroe, Ingham, Eaton and Clinton, a soil survey is underway by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), in cooperation with the Michigan Experiment Station at Michigan State University.

Teams of men are boring holes all over these counties, checking the soil samples and recording and mapping soil types.

The soil survey team in Washtenaw County consists of Neil Stroesenreuther and four men. They have been at work in Washtenaw for two years and have four more to go. Thus far they have surveyed and mapped 150,000 acres.

The current survey in Washtenaw is a cooperative ven-

ture between the SCS and the county with the latter picking up half the cost. When the survey is complete county, township, village and city planners will have at their disposal complete information on the subsoil of the county.

THEY WILL KNOW, for instance, where they might build houses, industrial complexes, roadbeds, or recreational areas based on the limitations of the soil beneath the surface. This information is available from county agents and the SCS to anyone who might be considering buying land for a specific purpose. The information can tell about septic tank drain fields, drainage and such things as whether or not a specific type of soil induces cracking in sidewalks, drives and certain kinds of construction.

The SCS can suggest ways the buyer might have a contractor correct the problems, but it may be that the cost of correction would discourage building on that site.

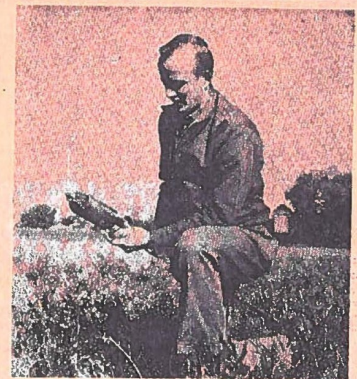
At present, and until about the first of December, soil scientists are walking the land, making about 75 borings a day and examining the soil to a depth of about five feet.

Slopes are measured and a record made of all the factors which might affect the suitability of the soil for farming, engineering, building sites, recreation and related uses. The observations are recorded on aerial photographs.

The survey team takes to the field about April 1, if ground conditions allow. During winter months they finish the maps, photographs, etc., and write up their findings for the soil survey manuscript according to Clark Eacker, district conservationist at the Ann Arbor SCS office.

OTHERS WHO use the findings, says Eacker, are land an-

Z-2 Sunday, Oct. 26, 1969—THE DETROIT NEWS—3-G



Survey crewman Jerry Larson checks sample

vent four cngles from putting \$40,000 houses where they should not be, it will have paid for itself."

If you have land you might like to build on some day, or if you are considering purchasing some, contact the SCS unit in the county, or the county agent. If there is no recent survey information, soil scientists will come out to your land and make an on-site inspection to determine the suitability for home, industrial or commercial building.

Experts blame grease vapor for wall paint discoloration

period will fade. If you think draperis and clothing hung greasy, yellow-brown discol-