

WINTER 2013
Volume 46, Number 1

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District Conservationist
Jeff Long,
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Tamarra Roseburgh,
Soil Conservationist

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 Raptors at 66th District Annual Meeting

The Wildlife Recovery Association will present an interesting and informative program on birds of prey at the Washtenaw County Conservation District's 66th Annual Meeting on January 16, 2014.

Featured in the presentation will be birds of prey that have been injured in such a way that they cannot survive in the wild.

The Wildlife Recovery Association, incorporated in 1979, provides services for and about wildlife and promotes a better understanding of their needs. The WRA provides educational outreach programs, participates in research and management programs to support rare and endangered species, and provides care for orphaned and injured raptors.

This should be an excellent program for young and old alike, so plan to bring the whole family to the 2014 Conservation District Annual Meeting.

District Director Election

All residents of Washtenaw County who are of legal age may vote in the election of two district Directors to be conducted at the Annual Meeting 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 15th, 2014.

2.) **At the Annual Meeting** on January 16, 2014.

Director Candidates

There are two candidates seeking the two open Director positions:



- Jeremy Hodges of Chelsea, production coordinator for the Eisenhower Center, and manages their 63-acre vocational farm; and
- Howard Sias of Lima Township who operates a cash crop and livestock farm and is a current Board Director.

Award Presentations

The meeting program will also include presentation of the 2013 Conservation Farmer of the Year and Tree Conservationist Awards. See pages 2 and 3 for more information about the award recipients.

The Annual Meeting will be held:

Thursday, January 16, 2014
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 13, 2014.

2013 Conservation Farmer of the Year

The Washtenaw County Conservation District is pleased to present the 2013, “Walter Wolfgang Memorial”, Conservation Farmer of the Year Award to the Paul and Connie Marion family.

Paul and his wife Connie operate a 357 acre dairy and cash crop farm in Saline Township, growing corn, alfalfa, soybeans and wheat. They milk 65 dairy cows. The Marion’s own 157 acres and rent the remaining acres farmed.

Paul’s father and uncle started the family farm in 1948. Paul and Connie started managing the farm in 1969 and in 1977 took over the farm on their own.

The Marion’s have had eleven children and seven of those help in some way on the family farm, including Mark, Mike, Marcia, Martin, Milton, Mitch and Marie. This makes three generations that have worked the Marion family farm. In addition, some of their seven grandchildren also occasionally help on the farm.

In the mid-1980’s the Marion’s contacted the Conservation District for assistance with a manure management system through the Rural Clean Water Program, Saline Valley Project and installed a manure holding pond.

In 2005, the Marion’s started participating in the Conservation Stewardship Program with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Through the CSP, the Marion’s have been able to take credit for their past and continued use of various conservation practices, including: soil testing their fields every three years and applying fertilizer according to those tests; no-till; crop rotations; field borders on a number of fields; filter strips; grassed waterways; and pest management.

In addition, the Marion’s maintain a food plot for wildlife on their home farm, and leave an area un-mowed for nesting birds until late summer on some of their rented land.



The Marion’s plant over 200 acres of crops no-till each year, primarily on their rolling rented ground. They have a no-till planter to plant their corn, and rent a no-till drill to plant wheat and soybeans. Using no-till helps the Marion’s reduce costs and save time in the field.



“Keeping our soil in good shape, keeping the water and air clean, and keeping our children and grandchildren interested in farming is why we use conservation practices,” said Paul.

And the Marion’s have been verified in all three systems of the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). They previously received verification in the cropping system, and in 2013 received their verification in the farmstead and livestock systems.

When asked what makes their farm operation successful, Paul and Connie said, “working together as a family and support from the Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service.”



Paul has made six trips across the Mackinaw Bridge during the annual antique tractor crossing event each September, driving his Massey Harris 44 special tractor. Paul is also president of the Saline Retired Iron Antique Club. The Marion’s are members of Michigan Milk Producers, Paul is a Farm Bureau board member and they are active members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Saline.

Doing their part to conserve our soil and water resources through good conservation efforts, and an overall stewardship philosophy has helped the Marion family maintain a successful farm operation. The Conservation District is pleased to recognize the Paul and Connie Marion family as the 2013 Conservation Farmers of the Year.

2013 Tree Conservationist



To recognize excellent tree planting efforts, the Conservation District is pleased to present the 2013 Tree Conservationist Award to Tom and Jenae Chulig of Bridgewater Township.

Tom and Jenae have been planting trees since the mid-1980's when they planted about 500 red and white pines to line the driveway of their home of 25 years on Marshall Road near Dexter. But most of their trees have been planted on their 27.5 acres in Bridgewater Township on Austin Road, which was once part of the old Lawrence Boettner farm, and has frontage on Schasser Lake.

"We have planted about 7,000 trees for reforestation over the years", said Tom. "We started with hardwoods, but the deer ate most of them. We have had better success once we switched to spruces," he continued.

The Chuligs have planted primarily blue, Norway and white spruces, but also red and white pines and habitat packets, many of which they obtained from the Conservation District. They completed three large plantings of 3,000 mixed conifers in 1997; then 1,500 spruce and white pine in 2012; and another 1,000 Norway spruce in 2013. And in between, several hundred assorted hardwoods and packets were planted. They have also planted larger size hardwood and fruit trees obtained from many different sources—auctions, friends and family or store close-out sales.



Many people may be familiar with the Chuligs property on Austin Road on the curves just west of Schneider Road, as they have built a log home that took seven years to complete. "There were a number of people

stopped to see what we were doing during construction," said Tom.

The beautiful home reminds you of something you might see in northern Michigan. According to Tom, "the idea for the log home came after we took a trip to Ranger Lake in Canada and visited several log homes. That planted the seed for building a log home on the Austin Road property to be our 'up-north' retreat close to Dexter. Then a few years later we were offered the locally grown logs to begin construction. Now, with the lake and the trees it looks like a place up north," said Tom.

Their log home was constructed with those pine logs "recycled" from sites where they would have been otherwise considered waste. The trees were cut down for new construction projects along the Huron River near Ann Arbor and the Pineview Golf Course near Ypsilanti. The



logs were then transported by Tom and a crew of helpers to the Austin Road property and prepared for use in construction. Left over logs were then milled at Charles Schaible's farm on Pleasant Lake Road and used to side a barn constructed in 2006.

The Chuligs' used stones from the property for landscaping and erosion control on the creek which drains to Schasser Lake; and stones from a friend's property on Joy Road were used in their log home.

A small, naturally seeded walnut grove along the creek has also been improved by the Chuligs. An old farm dump near the walnuts was cleaned up and the grove mowed. "It provides a nice place for the grandchildren to play while the walnuts mature," said Tom as he was building a rope swing in the walnut grove.

The Chuligs planting efforts have paid off, as anyone driving by on Austin Road can see. Many beautiful spruces can be seen along the road, as well as a picturesque view of their log home. As the trees mature, they will provide a nice wind and noise break for the road, and make it look even more like a cottage property in northern Michigan.

Because of their consistent, long-term tree planting efforts, and overall stewardship ethic, the Conservation District is pleased to recognize Tom and Jenae Chulig with the 2013 Tree Conservationist Award.

2013 MAEAP Report

By Chris Coulter & Amy Gilhouse, MAEAP Conservation Technicians

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) has made great strides in 2013. Washtenaw County now has 14 farms that are MAEAP verified in one or more systems. 5 of those farms came on board with verification for the first time in 2013!

Verifications include: Cherry Hill Ford Farm, DuRussels' Potato Farms Inc, Bruce Haeussler Farm, Horning Farms LLC, Lloyd and David Jedele Farm, Paul and Connie Marion Farm, Frank Rochowiak Farm, Phil Selter Farm, Ken and Kathy Siler Farm, Dyer Family Farm LLC, Great Lakes Bentgrass LLC, Zilke Vegetable Farm, White Lotus Farms LLC, and the Adams Farm.

2013 has been a very busy year. In January of 2013 the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) requested that the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) technicians in the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB) watershed (Lenawee, Monroe & Washtenaw Counties) work together as a team on MAEAP verifications. Amy was asked by MDARD to assist in training the new technicians, including Chris Coulter. Working as a team has been of tremendous value in bringing more farms to verification.

2013 accomplishments in Washtenaw County included:

ITEM	# COMPLETED
Farm*A*Systs	12
Crop*A*Systs	17
Livestock*A*Systs	8
Safe Food*A*Systs	1
MAEAP Farmstead System Verifications	6
MAEAP Cropping System Verifications	7
MAEAP Livestock System Verifications	3
Safe Food*A*Syst Certificates of Completion	1

In addition to working with producers on verifications, the following activities were accomplished:

- MAEAP Presentations at: Natural Resources Working Group Meetings; WLEB Producers Focus meeting; Stewardship Network meeting; Soybean Committee Meeting; Washtenaw County Conservation District Annual Meeting; Washtenaw pesticide exam review class and Emergency Management Workshop; Washtenaw Michigan Milk Producers meeting; Washtenaw Food Policy Council meeting; Washtenaw Farm Bureau annual meeting; Washtenaw fall farm field day.
- Organized 3 tall ship, water quality sails aboard the Appledore Schooner, 2 sails out of Bay City and 1 sail

on the Detroit River, providing Michigan farmers, Conservation District MAEAP staff, NRCS staff, and partners a first-hand look at issues of our Great Lakes and Conservation Practices to address water quality.

- Meetings attended: MAEAP Communications Committee; River Raisin Partnership Meeting; Lake Erie Stewardship Initiative Meeting.
- Organized and/or Hosted: WLEB Algae Bloom MAEAP & Conservation Practices Conference taking 33 participants to Stone Lab and out on a research vessel to look at issues of Lake Erie; wrote a \$3,000 grant proposal to Farm Bureau for the Lake Erie conference and follow-up tour; well water screening event for nitrates and bacteria in partnership with Eastern Michigan University students; assisted EMU intern in organizing Water Quality concerns in Waste Water Management Tour; trainings for WLEB MAEAP technicians and NRCS staff.
- Promotional, Public Relations Activities: Assisted with fair displays at the Chelsea, Manchester and Saline community fairs.
- Assisted with Conservation District tree and native plant sales.

It has been both a very positive and educational experience to work with the broad spectrum of agricultural production that exists in Washtenaw County. We have greatly enjoyed developing relationships with producers who have consistently proven their interest and dedication to conservation, sustainability, and environmental assurance for their farms.

We look forward to building on the successes of the past year in order to move an even greater number of farms toward environmental verification in 2014!

For more information about the MAEAP Water Stewardship Program, contact Chris Coulter at (734) 761-6721 ext. 101, or Amy Gilhouse at (517) 673-1655.



Diana & Dick Dyer, Dyer Family Farm

2013 Conservation Highlights

By Steve Olds, District Conservationist

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 \$985,704 of 2008 Farm Bill Conservation Program monies being awarded in Washtenaw County for new contracts 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) and the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP). In total, 27 new contracts were approved in the county on over 1,089 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 vs. dollars spent being taken into account.

The Seasonal High Tunnel and the Forest Management Plan practices continue to be in demand. 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.

With the Forest Management Plans (FMP), 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 (FRPP).

In all, 5 projects were closed this year from prior applications. Additionally, 15 new applications were processed by 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.

This past year, has seen some new additions and changes to the NRCS field office team. In June, Jason DeMoss began to serve as a Soil Conservationist Summer Trainee.

In October, Soil Conservationist Quincy Coleman left to take a promotion with the NRCS in Kansas. Tamarra Roseburgh, Soil Conservationist and Jeff Long, Soil Conservation Technician continue to be productive members of the Team.

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



Executive Director Report

By Dennis Rice, District Executive Director

Fiscal year 2013 has been a productive, but also challenging year for the Conservation District.

In October, 2012 the District was asked by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to participate in an effort for bring additional Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) technicians to the Western Lake Erie Basin through a two-year, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant. In January, 2013 the District received grant funding and hired Chris Coulter as a MAEAP Technician to work exclusively in Washtenaw County.

Chris has been a welcome addition to the District and has had a successful year. See Chris's report on page 4 for more details. If you are interested in MAEAP verification for your farm or just have questions about it, give Chris a call. He would be happy to speak with you or set up an appointment to meet you at your farm and discuss MAEAP.

Also in 2013, the District began partnering with the Legacy Land Conservancy on a project to promote conservation practices and conservation easements in riparian areas of the upper River Raisin watershed. The District is pleased to be able to work together on this effort with Legacy over the next few years.

Assistance provided by the District and Natural Resources Conservation Service in 2013 is listed on page 6 and here are the results of several other programs in 2013 not listed:

- Fish Day – generated 32 orders for 1,539 fish fingerlings and 34.5 gallons of minnows for pond stocking.
- Rain Barrel & Composter Sales – 68 rain barrels, 13 composters and 27 related accessories sold.

District tree and native plant sales are still the most popular services we provide, however, there has been a general downward trend in the number of orders received and numbers of trees sold over the last ten years. Our tree and native plant sales are the largest revenue source for the District. While there may be a saturation point for tree planting, the State's difficult economic situation has impacted District tree sales, and has made the revenue generated from tree and plant sales all the more critical to maintaining District programs and services.

We continue to evaluate our tree and native plant sales program to make adjustments and improvements, and appreciate the input received from our customers this year.

In a related effort to address our financial situation, the District Board has appointed an ad-hoc committee to look at the resource concerns that were identified in our 2011 resource assessment, compare those with existing services and programs offered by local government and conservation organizations, and identify possible gaps. Then, the committee will try to suggest possible services the District could consider offering that would address those gaps and generate revenue to support those services and also provide operating revenue for the District. We look forward to the recommendations this committee will provide.

Finally, the District wants to thank Washtenaw County for allowing the District staff to use space in a County facility during the federal government shutdown in October when the District was forced out of its office, allowing us to maintain operations.

As we look forward to a new year, the Conservation District Board and staff look forward to assisting you with the conservation and management of your natural resources during 2014.

District and NRCS Assistance Provided in 2013

Financial Statement Washtenaw County Conservation District October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013

TECHNICAL & OTHER ASSISTANCE	
Businesses, Community Groups & Individuals Assisted	80
Forestry & Wildlife Assistance Provided	70
Trees, plants & other items Distributed	38,446
Number of Orders Received	449
Non-Tree Conservation Product Sales: (# of customers / \$ value)	46 / \$2,520
Groundwater Assistance Provided	221
Farm, Crop, Livestock or Other *A*Systs Completed	38
MAEAP Verifications & Re-verifications Completed	17
Agrichemical Handling or Mixing Facilities	1
Comprehensive Nutrient Mgt. Plans Written / Applied	4 / 4
Conservation Systems Planned: (# plans / # acres)	36 / 1,571Ac.
Seasonal High Tunnel Systems	2,178 sq.ft.
Wildlife Habitat Management	151 Ac.
County Financial Assistance Awarded (from all Farm Bill Programs)	\$985,704
TECHNICAL REVIEWS AND/OR APPROVALS	
Public Act 116 & Purchase of Development Rights Applications Reviewed	10
State Natural Resources & Environmental Protection Act Public Notices Reviewed	24
NRCS Conservation Plans Reviewed	37
EDUCATIONAL	
Conservation Update Newsletter Issues	1
E-Conservation Update E-mail Issues	12
Educational Materials Distributed	370
Presentations and Demonstrations: (# / # of participants)	19 / 175
News Releases or Radio PSAs Distributed	12
District Web Site Home Page Visits	23,249

REVENUES

Federal Contribution Agreement	\$ 5,285
State Western Lake Erie Basin MAEAP Grant	42,774
County Appropriation	30,000
Conservation Sales (Trees and native plants; rain barrels and composters; other products and materials)	66,696
Charges for Services	5,687
Interest	252
Other Revenues	882
TOTAL REVENUES	\$151,576

EXPENDITURES

Operations Expenses (Director & employee expenses; office supplies; bank service charges; postage; petty cash; telephone; web site maintenance; office services; audit; mileage; sales tax; equipment purchases & repairs; products and materials purchased for resale; annual meeting; annual report)	\$ 85,405
Tree & Plant Sales Program Expenses	36,9309
Western Lake Erie Basin MAEAP Grant Expenses	43,396
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$165,730
EXCESS OF EXPENDITURES OVER REVENUES	(\$14,155)
BEGINNING FUND BALANCE as of October 1, 2012	\$ 81,856
ENDING FUND BALANCE as of September 30, 2013	\$ 67,701

RAIN BARRELS & COMPOSTERS

Made from recycled food-grade barrels that have been thoroughly cleaned, then assembled in the USA. Composter frames made from 100% recycled plastic lumber. Your purchases support work by the Washtenaw County Conservation District. Rain Barrels can be ordered from the Conservation District Office or by mail. If not in stock products arrive in 2-3 weeks. Pick-up will be at the District Office unless notified otherwise. Order forms and more information can be found on the District web site at: <http://washtenawcd.org/ps/rainbarrels.php> and <http://washtenawcd.org/ps/composters.php>.

RAIN BARRELS

Collect and store rain water from rooftops for later use to water plants, flowers and gardens.

- 55-gallon capacity, shapes may vary.
- 30-gallon balcony-size barrels also available.
- Colors: black, blue, grey, terra-cotta.
- Aluminum screening on top to keep out leaves, debris & insects.
- Includes front hose shutoff; side fitting to connect multiple barrels; and overflow fitting & cap.
- Designed to remain outside year around.
- Includes installation & use instructions.
- 5-year warranty on materials and workmanship.
- Reduces storm water runoff & pollutants carried to drains & rivers.



TUMBLING COMPOSTERS



- Perfect where space is limited.
- Only requires a 3 foot by 4 foot area.
- Comes fully assembled.
- Easy to turn—at hip level to reduce back strain.
- Center tube & steel bars to break-up and fluff-up compost for better aeration.
- Low maintenance, nothing to clog.
- Pest-proof, fully-enclosed, off the ground.
- Avoids odor problems by controlling moisture and aeration in excessively dry or rainy areas.
- 5-year warranty on materials & workmanship.
- Includes use instructions