



CONSERVATION UPDATE

Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan

2015 ANNUAL REPORT Volume 48, Number 1

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Acting District Conservationist
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Soil Conservationist
Dextron Dorsey,
Soil Conservationist
Amanda Karr,
Soil Conservation Technician

Our Mission

*To educate and assist the people
of Washtenaw County with the
conservation and management of
their natural resources.*

Web

www.washtenawcd.org

Facebook

[facebook.com/wccd.org](https://www.facebook.com/wccd.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

Renewable Energy in Michigan presentation at 68th Annual Meeting

David Konkle, Board Member with the Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association will present an interesting and informative program, "Renewable Energy in Michigan: Now And In The Future" at the Washtenaw County Conservation District's 68th Annual Meeting on January 21, 2016.

David Konkle graduated from The University of Michigan with a degree in Atmospheric Sciences in 1974 and began his energy career working for Sunstructures, a local architecture company involved with solar energy and energy studies. He then became the City of Ann Arbor Energy Coordinator in 1988 where he served for 20 years.

Following retirement from the City in 2008, Dave worked as the Energy Programs Director for the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority.

Dave is a nationally known speaker, and has received a number of energy use related awards.

If you are interested in learning more about renewable energy in Michigan this should be an excellent program, so plan to attend the 2016 Conservation District Annual Meeting.

Call the District Office to make your dinner reservations today!

Award Presentations

The meeting program will include presentation of the 2015 Conservation Farmer of the Year and Tree Conservationist Awards.

See pages 2 and 3 for more information about the award recipients.

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 20th, 2016.

2.) **At the Annual Meeting** on January 21, 2015.

Director Candidates

Two Director positions are up for election including:

- Matthew Koenn of Sylvan Township, current Board Chairman who is seeking re-election to a 4-year term.
- Carley Kratz of Bridgewater Township who was appointed to fill a vacant Director position and is seeking election to a 2-year partial term.

The Annual Meeting
will be held:

**Thursday,
January 21, 2016
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 15, 2016**

2015 Conservation Farmer of the Year

The Washtenaw County Conservation District is pleased to present the 2015, “Walter Wolfgang Memorial”, Conservation Farmer of the Year Award to John and Jean Cares.

The Cares operate a 450 acre cash crop farm in Webster Township, growing 140 acres of corn, 140 acres of soybeans, 80 acres of wheat and 60 acres of hay each year. The Cares own 197 acres on their Farrell Road farmstead which was purchased in 1985, and rent the remaining acres farmed.

Many people knew John from The Dexter Mill. The Cares purchased the Mill in 1979, owning and operating it for thirty-five years until it was sold in 2014. They also farmed all those years while running the Mill. The Cares have five children, all of which now live off the farm, but most still have some involvement in agriculture.

John and Jean are modest about their conservation efforts, but when you consider everything they have done, there is quite an impressive list of conservation work, including: no-till, variable rate fertilizer application, cover crops, closure of several abandoned wells, a forest management plan, use of solar panels to generate electricity for the farm, participation in the Conservation Reserve Program, and Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) verifications in the cropping and livestock systems.

They first tried no-till back when the Conservation District had a no-till drill for rent, and from there have planted all their crops no-till. Their crops are rotated and cover crops have been used for the past four years on about 90 acres. “We have seen increased yields using the cover crops, so our goal is to use cover crops for all our crops,” said John. Not only can cover crops boost yields, they can help provide organic matter for the soil and protect it from erosion.

A new addition to their cropping plans for this year is growing white wheat for Chelsea Milling (Jiffy Mix). If successful, this will provide a good economic boost for the Cares, and also add to the locally grown white wheat crop used to supply Jiffy Mix.



The Cares farmstead in Webster Township.

A forest management plan was developed in 2014 by consulting forester Carl Burhop. The plan provides detailed actions to assist the Cares in managing their 26-acre woodlot for timber regeneration, firewood and



Jean and John Cares

enjoyment. John and Jean heat their home with wood, and have plenty of wood to burn between dead ash and elm in fencerows, and dead trees in their woodlot. And besides firewood, “everyone who comes out to the farm enjoys going back to the woods,” said Jean.

Solar panels were added to one of the farmstead buildings in 2014, and have generated enough power to provide all the electrical needs for the farm. “We are as close as we can get to being off the grid,” said John.

A small, once shallow pond was improved by the Cares and has been used for swimming and fishing. And, a grass buffer has been maintained on either side of a small stream that flows between two crop fields into their woodlot, helping to reduce erosion and runoff from the fields into the stream.

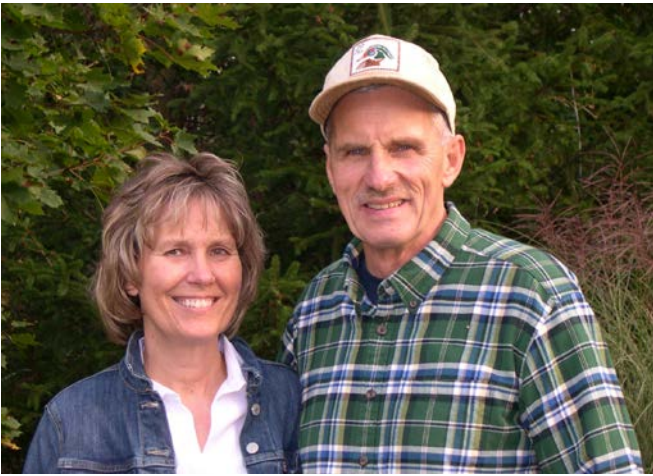
The Cares completed their MAEAP verifications in the past year for both the cropping and livestock systems. Although they don’t have any livestock now, John and Jean felt that completing the livestock verification gave them the option in the future to bring livestock back to the farm. They also hope to add an above ground fueling facility in the future which will allow them to complete verification in the MAEAP farmstead system.

When asked what makes their farm operation successful, John and Jean agreed, “trying to do what’s right to keep their farm sustainable and economically viable, which includes conservation.” And their interest in agriculture and keeping it vibrant in Washtenaw County goes beyond just their farm, as Jean serves on the Webster Township Farmland and Open Space Board, and as the farmer representative on the Ann Arbor Greenbelt Advisory Commission. The Cares are also Farm Bureau members, and Jean is on the Farm Bureau Board.

Doing their part to conserve our soil and water resources through good conservation efforts, and an overall stewardship philosophy has helped the Cares maintain a successful farm operation.

The Conservation District is pleased to recognize John and Jean Cares as the 2015 Conservation Farmers of the Year.

2015 Tree Conservationist



Robin and Ed Wojtys

To recognize excellent tree planting efforts, the Conservation District is pleased to present the 2015 Tree Conservationist Award to Dr. Edward and Robin Wojtys (pronounced Voy-tis) of Northfield Township.

The Wojtys' started planting trees in 1985 on property in the Cheyboygan area, between two and three thousand trees over several years. They then shifted their planting activity to 40 acres of land they purchased in 1990 on Hellner Road in Northfield Township.

For the past 25 years Ed and Robin have planted 100-150 trees per year, most of those obtained from the Conservation District tree sales, and some larger specimen-type trees from other sources. "When we bought the land it was an old corn field," said Ed. Upon entering the property today, you would have no idea it was once an open field.

In addition to their home and most of their tree plantings, the Wojtys' land includes 32 acres of woods. They have planted conifers along the old hedgerows to create beautiful windbreaks and screens. And, an orchard lines one side of the driveway. "We have planted trees for their aesthetic value, but also for wildlife habitat and fruit," said Ed.

Over the last 30 years, Ed and Robin have planted roughly 6,000 trees between their Hellner Road property and land in the Cheyboygan area, including white pine, blue, Norway and white spruces, birch, hazelnuts, maples, oaks and a few other species.

They have multiple fruit tree plantings of about 150 trees, which include several varieties of apples, pears, peaches—Ed's personal favorite—persimmons, plums and Asian pears. Their largest fruit orchard is near their home. "We planted some fruit trees back by the woods, in hopes it would keep the deer away from the trees near the house, but I don't know how well that has worked," Ed said with a smile.

Dr. Wojtys is an orthopaedic surgeon at MedSport of The University of Michigan Health System. He treats athletes and non-athletes alike, young and old, helping them remain active. And while he loves his job, "it's

inside, and I really like coming home and being able to be outside enjoying and caring for my trees," he said.

Robin enjoys planting flowers and has created a number of flower gardens around their property. She spent a lot of time cleaning up a stone and debris pile from the old farm along one side of the property, and with a lot of manure and hard work has created both flower gardens and space for more trees.

The Wojtys' have some bee hives to help with pollination of their fruit trees, and also have planted wildlife food plots. Near the woods is a small field of turnips, oats, and also a clover patch. "The deer will be back here during the winter and really clean things out," said Ed. In addition to deer, pheasants and a growing flock of turkey frequent the Wojtys' land.

While most of Ed and Robin's tree planting efforts have been concentrated around their home and what was once the open field, they have also planted conifers and fruit trees near and in openings of the woods. And, they use fallen trees from the woods for firewood to augment a geothermal heating system used to heat their home. "When our son was in high school and even in college, he was able to have a good physical job, and make some good money selling firewood from the woods" said Ed.

Deer have been a challenge for the Wojtys' tree planting efforts. To deal with deer pressure, they have used fencing on fruit trees, left vegetation around newly planted trees to try and hide them, provided food and habitat plantings, and planted species less desirable to the deer. "It's frustrating for Robin though, when the deer eat her flowers, hostas and the shrubs by the house," said Ed.

"Our vision was to create a setting that looks like you are up north," continued Ed. Seeing the success of their tree planting efforts today has made that vision a reality.

Because of their consistent, long-term tree planting efforts, and overall stewardship ethic, the Conservation District is pleased to recognize Ed and Robin Wojtys with the 2015 Tree Conservationist Award.



2015 MAEAP Report

By Chris Coulter, Amy Gilhouse and Lindsay Garrison, MAEAP Conservation Technicians

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) has made consistent progress throughout 2015. Statewide, the program celebrated over 600 new verifications this year!

MAEAP has also continued to see steady growth in Washtenaw County. We now have 26 farms that are verified in one or more systems, including 6 farms that became verified in 2015!

This year's newly verified farms include: Broadview Farms LLC, Pittsfield Township; John and Jean Cares, Webster Township; Matt Hinderer, Sylvan Township; Phil and Judy Gordon, Saline Township; Cherry Hill Ford Farm, Superior Township; and Renner's Corner Farm, Bridgewater Township. Several of these farms were verified in multiple systems for a total of 8 new system verifications. Congratulations to these producers who are being recognized for their conservation ethic and continued commitment to environmental stewardship!

2015 accomplishments in Washtenaw County included:

ITEM	# COMPLETED
Farm*A*Systs	18
Crop*A*Systs	16
Livestock*A*Systs	12
MAEAP Farmstead System Verifications	1
MAEAP Cropping System Verifications	6
MAEAP Livestock System Verifications	1

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

- MAEAP Presentations at: Soybean Promotion Committee Meeting; Washtenaw County Conservation District Annual Meeting; Washtenaw pesticide exam review classes; Soybean Promotion Committee Washtenaw field day; and Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) Region 10 meeting.
- Meetings Organized and/or Hosted: Two MAEAP Phase 1 approved producer meetings focusing on commercial pesticide applicator license exam review and the MAEAP verification process - also arranged a presentation from local Red Cross volunteers focusing on pesticide application hazards and first aid at the March meeting; well water screening event for nitrates in partnership with Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.
- Assisted with: technical input for development of pay-for-performance conservation software; inventory and evaluation site visits for NRCS conservation plans.



2015 MAEAP verified farm: Broadview Farms LLC, Nathan (left) and George McCalla (right).

- Meetings attended: WLEB staff meetings; Monroe Farm Bureau farm safety seminar; Washtenaw MMPA annual meeting; Washtenaw County Farm Bureau annual meeting; MACD fall kickoff and summer conferences; Farmer's Advisory Council meetings; Monroe and Lenawee pesticide exam review classes; MSU integrated pest management meeting; Washtenaw Ag Banquet; Ag Technician In-service training; well closure training; conservation tillage training; MARI training; Center for Excellence annual field day.
- Other Activities:
 - Coordinated with Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to collect well water samples for detailed analysis.
 - Assisted with Conservation District fall and spring tree sales and spring native plant sale.
- Promotional, Public Relations Activities:
 - Assisted with fair displays at the Chelsea and Saline community fairs.
 - Partnered with NRCS, Washtenaw County Conservation District, Washtenaw Office of Water Resources Commissioner, Greenstone Farm Credit Services and Washtenaw County Farm Bureau to coordinate and facilitate MAEAP Tall ship Sails, Lake Erie Conference Days and Maumee River Day to bring Washtenaw Producers to experiential events to learn more about current and emerging issues of water quality.

For more information about MAEAP or how your farm can become MAEAP-verified, contact Chris Coulter by phone at: (734) 761-6721 ext. 101 or e-mail at: christopher.coulter@mi.nacdnet.net.

2015 Conservation Highlights

By Solomon Andrews, Acting District Conservationist

The Ann Arbor Field Office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) serves Washtenaw and Wayne Counties and is working hard at putting conservation on the ground. NRCS is continuously accepting applications for its EQIP, ACEP and CSTP programs.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), provides cost share to address resource concerns dealing with soil, water, plants, animals and energy. A few of the conservation practices that were funded last year include: Fueling Facilities, Nutrient and Pest Management, and Seasonal High Tunnels.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSTP) is another program available through NRCS which rewards producers for being good stewards of the land. Cropland, pastureland, forest and rangeland are all eligible land types for this program. If you think you are a good steward of the land, please stop by our office and fill out an application.

NRCS also offers easement programs through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), to landowners who want to maintain or enhance their land in a way that is beneficial to agriculture and/or the environment. All NRCS easement programs are voluntary. We provide technical help and financial assistance, but local landowners and organizations are needed to make NRCS easement programs successful.

NRCS is working closely with the Washtenaw Conservation District to help producers obtain Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) verification. Cost share is available to producers who only need two additional practices to complete their MAEAP verification.

There have been some staff changes within NRCS this past year. Steve Olds, District Conservationist, retired in May. An Acting District Conservationist will be in place until the position is filled. Solomon Andrews, District Conservationist for Bay City, is currently serving as Acting District Conservationist until further notice. Soil Conservationist, Tamarra Roseburgh was promoted to District Conservationist for Monroe County. Tamara's position was filled by Dextrin Dorsey. Dextrin has served as Soil Conservationist in Saginaw County for two years, and brings a lot of NRCS experience with him.

NRCS and the Conservation District look forward to working with you to address resource concerns on your land. If you have questions or need any additional information you can visit our website at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/mi/home/> or give us a call at (734) 761-8789 ext. 3.

**Watch for the new, updated Conservation District website coming in January, 2016.
Check it out at: www.washtenawcd.org**

2015 District Manager Report

By Dennis Rice, District Manager

Many of the accomplishments and assistance provided by the District and Natural Resources Conservation Service in fiscal year 2015 are listed in the table on page 6. Below are brief highlights of other accomplishments and efforts undertaken by the District in 2015:

- **Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Western Lake Erie Basin grant:** completed the first year of a new three-year grant providing technical assistance through the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). See the MAEAP Report on page 4 for information on 2015 MAEAP accomplishments.
- **Marketing Plan Development:** based on recommendations provided by last year's Program Development Committee, the District received suggestions from a University of Michigan, Ross School of Business marketing class on ways to market and promote the District, its programs and services. As a result, the District has set-up a Facebook page; is in the process of updating its website; and is considering setting up a marketing intern program.
- **Community Fairs:** presented a display at the Chelsea and Saline Fairs on District programs and services, distributing 287 items of information.
- **Fish Day:** 45 orders were placed for 2,944 fish & 62.5 gallons of minnows for pond stocking.
- **Rain Barrel & Composter Sales:** sold 69 rain barrels, 9 composters and 38 barrel risers and downspout diverters. Rain barrel sales increased 69% from 2014.
- **Tree & Plant Sales:** conducted two tree sales and one native plant sale. See table on page 6 for the results of these sales.
- **Water Quality Cruise/Sails:** in partnership with the Washtenaw County Farm Bureau, six cruise and sail events were conducted to look at water quality issues related to the Lake Erie algae blooms, MAEAP and conservation practices. These included: two tall ship sails on the Detroit River; two Lake Erie Day conferences at the Stone Lab; one cruise on the Maumee River in Toledo, Ohio; and an Agri-Business Day at Stone Lab. There were 20 participants from Washtenaw County.
- **Huron River Ag Nutrient Reduction Project:** assisted the Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC) in development of an updated grant proposal to provide technical assistance, practice funding and educational efforts in the Huron River watershed to reduce nutrients and sediment. The proposal is a partnership between the District, NRCS, HRWC and Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner.

The Conservation District Board and staff look forward to assisting you with the conservation and management of your natural resources during 2016.

District and NRCS Assistance Provided in 2015

TECHNICAL & OTHER ASSISTANCE	
General Conservation Assistance Provided	210
Forestry & Wildlife Assistance Provided	36
Trees, Plants & other items Distributed & Number of Orders Received	37,800 491
MAEAP Crop *A*Systs Completed & Acres	16 7,010 Ac.
MAEAP Farm & Livestock *A*Systs Completed	30
MAEAP Verifications & Re-verifications Completed	8
Conservation Systems Planned: (# plans / # acres)	12 / 315 Ac.
Agrichemical Handling Facility	1
Forest Management Plans Written	2
Seasonal High Tunnel Systems	2,178 sq.ft.
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	62 Ac.
Wildlife Habitat Management	49 Ac.
Financial Assistance Awarded (from all Farm Bill Programs)	\$101,014
TECHNICAL REVIEWS AND/OR APPROVALS	
Public Act 116 & Purchase of Development Rights Applications Reviewed & Acres	4 235.57 Ac.
NRCS Conservation Plans Reviewed & Acres	15 1,337 Ac.
EDUCATIONAL	
Conservation Update Newsletter Issues	1
E-Conservation Update E-mail Issues	12
Educational Materials Distributed	649
Presentations and Demonstrations: (# / # of participants)	7 / 232
News Releases or Radio Public Service Announcements Distributed	21
District Web Site Home Page Visits	34,381

Financial Statement Washtenaw County Conservation District October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015

REVENUES

State Western Lake Erie Basin MAEAP Grant	\$ 64,019
County Appropriation	30,000
Conservation Sales (Trees and native plants; rain barrels and composters; other products and materials)	78,384
Charges for Services	18,235
Interest	136
Other Revenues	1,283
TOTAL REVENUES:	\$192,057

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)	\$ 87,883
Tree & Plant Sales Program Expenses	40,910
Western Lake Erie Basin MAEAP Grant Expenses	64,019
TOTAL EXPENDITURES:	\$192,812
EXCESS OF EXPENDITURES OVER REVENUES	(\$755)
BEGINNING FUND BALANCE as of October 1, 2014	\$ 72,290
ENDING FUND BALANCE as of September 30, 2015	\$ 71,535



the District on our
new Facebook page:
[facebook.com/wccd.org](https://www.facebook.com/wccd.org)

RAIN BARRELS & COMPOSTERS

Made from recycled food-grade barrels that have been thoroughly cleaned, then assembled in the USA. Contact the Conservation District office for on-hand availability. If not in stock, products arrive in 2-3 weeks. Pick-up is at the District Office unless notified otherwise. Order forms and more information can be found on the District web site at: www.washtenawcd.org. Your purchases support work by the Washtenaw County Conservation District. Thank you!

RAIN BARRELS

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

- 55-gallon capacity, shapes may vary.
- Colors: black, gray, 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.
- Reduces storm water runoff & pollutants carried to drains & rivers.
- 5-year warranty on materials and workmanship.



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