

## Eaton Conservation District

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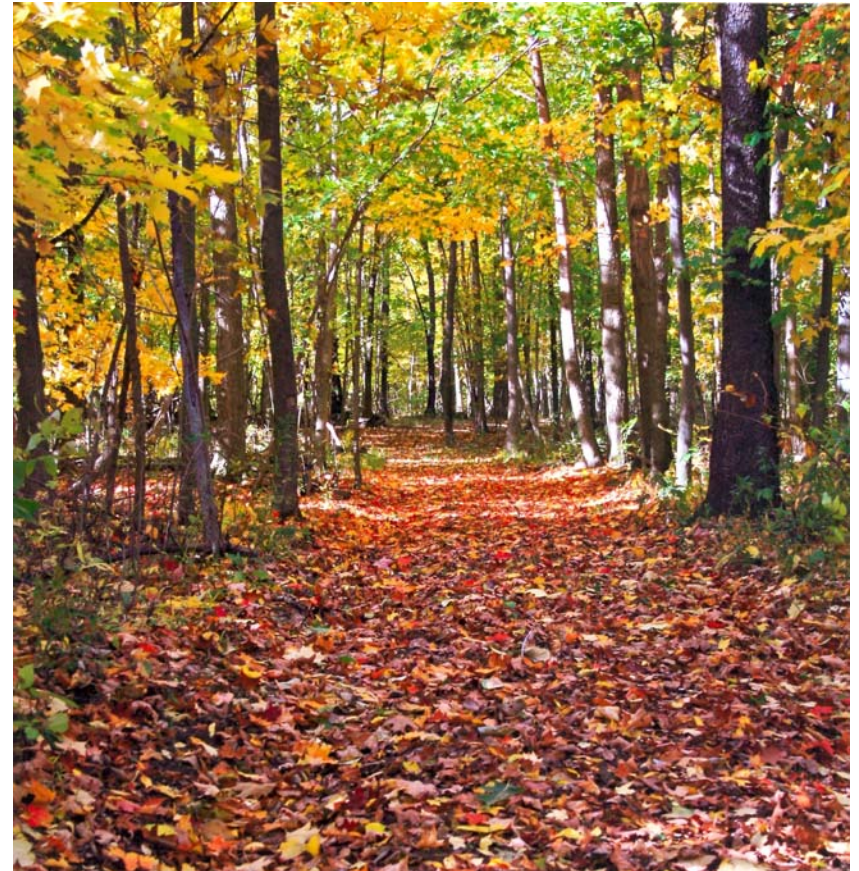


# EATON CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## 2011 ANNUAL REPORT

The Conservation District would like  
to thank all of our supporters and  
volunteers from 2011

Your support and enthusiasm has and  
will continue to be an inspiration to us  
as we work together to put  
conservation on the ground.



YOUR LAND,  
YOUR WATER,  
YOUR MICHIGAN

**Board of Directors**

- Mike Lawless - Chair
- William Bradford - Vice-Chair
- James Droscha - Treasurer
- David Brown - Secretary
- Tom Raymond - Member



**District Staff:**

- Andrea Stay - Executive Director
- Jennifer Hunnell - Statewide Arbor Day Coordinator
- Jennifer Silveri - MAEAP Water Stewardship Technician
- Heather Triezenberg - Middle Grand River Watershed Coord.
- Rita Black - Conservation Intern

**NRCS Staff:**

- Tim Redder - District Conservationist
- Ruben Torres—Soil Conservationist

The District focuses on natural resource problems and solutions. Our services include protecting ground and surface water, watershed planning, woodland and wildlife improvements, soils information, stream bank stabilization, conserving and restoring wetlands, providing tree seedlings, conservation books and information workshops. The Conservation District serves as the link between the landowner and local, state and federal governments and conservation organizations.

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

**2011 Photo Contest Winners**



Grand Prize & 1st place Wildlife  
Matthew Perry

1st Place Agriculture  
Theresa Miller



1st Place People Enjoying Nature  
Theresa Miller



1st Place Trees and Plants  
Faye Elston

## Board Member Elections

Eaton Conservation District has 2 board member positions up for election in January. The positions are 4 year terms and serve Eaton County’s Conservation District Board. This year Eaton Conservation District has two candidates. Jim Droscha and Mary Jean Baker have submitted petitions for the open positions. Candidates wishing to run for one of the positions must be a resident of the district and must file a petition to run, signed by five district residents, 60 days prior to the annual meeting. A resident is defined as any individual of legal age who can demonstrate they live within the district. This year’s Annual Meeting is being held on January 26<sup>th</sup> 2012 and features local Conservation Programs.

Jim Droscha has served on the Conservation District Board since 1991 the majority of time as treasurer. Jim owns the Droscha Family Dairy LLC on Island Highway, in Eaton Township. Droscha operates the 360 acre farm and manages 150 head dairy herd. Droscha raises corn to provide feed for the cattle. Jim is also President of the Lansing Local Michigan Milk Producers Association and former Eaton Township Supervisor.

As an active community member Mary Jean Baker has decided to run for a Board position to do what she can to support Conservation Programs in Eaton County. Mary Jean feels it’s important to keep farmland dedicated to agricultural use. Baker has begun her 7<sup>th</sup> year on Charlotte’s City Council and is serving as Mayor pro-tem. Mary Jean has been active in 4-H both as a member and a leader has served on the Eaton County Fair Board and the Battle Creek Watershed Committee. Presently Baker is on the Fitch H. Beach Airport Advisory Committee and serves Eaton County Transportation Authority.

Mary Jean is also a Master Gardner and has served many organizations and clubs as an officer. Baker and her family also work as volunteers to keep a 3 mile stretch of Lake Michigan shoreline clean.



Please let us know if you are interested in serving on the board of directors in the future!

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2010-2011</b>
Federal Grants	72,537.37
Contributions from Local Units	25,628.72
State Grants	245,451.34
Charges for Services	2,515.56
Interest and Rentals	4,420.08
Tree Sale	31,860.32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>382,413.39</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Transfer from Fund Balance	6,934.02
281 District Operation	86,167.37
282 Groundwater Expense Control	44,338.79
285 Battle creek River Restoration	0.00
289 Arbor Day	42,110.41
291 319 Expense Control	5,665.44
292 Butternut Creek Restoration	65,638.91
294 Tree & Resale Exp	20,098.71
299 Groundwater website	125,044.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>389,064.29</b>
Difference	0
Beginning Fund Balance	64,105.51
Ending Fund Balance	57,171.49



# Introduction

The Eaton Conservation District (ECD) was formally established June 3, 1946. The Michigan enabling legislation was specifically provided by Act 297 of 1937. A petition was signed by 165 Eaton county land owners and submitted to the State Soil Conservation Committee March 12, 1946. A public hearing was held on April 3, 1946 where it was determined that the conservation district was needed for the public health safety, and welfare. The Thornapple Grand Conservation District was officially organized June 3, 1946 following a county-wide referendum April 24, 1946. In 2007, the board of directors voted to change the name to Eaton Conservation District in recognition of geographic boundaries.

The locally elected five-member board of directors makes all planning decisions regarding District programs and activities. The directors hire qualified staff to conduct and carry out the programs and activities they have approved. These programs improve awareness, provide information and technical help to assist people in the District to properly manage their natural resources. There are 79 Conservation Districts in Michigan that are generally organized along county boundaries.



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 programs focused on solving resources issues.

There are also many practices that are scheduled to be implemented in the upcoming year that NRCS is actively working with landowners to complete. Some of the practices scheduled to be implemented are:

- Forest Management Plans
- Composting Facility
- Watering Facilities
- Grassed Waterways
- Agrichemical Handling Facilities
- Nutrient Management
- Pipeline
- Prescribed Grazing
- Pest Management
- Roof Runoff Management
- Heavy Use Area Protection
- Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans
- Wetland Restoration



We are currently in the process of completing applications for FY2012 and working with landowners that are interested in applying for one of the many conservation programs offered through NRCS. There is a very short sign up period this year so do not wait if you think you may be interested. There is no better time to inquire and apply if you are interested in improving your land. NRCS in the state of Michigan in FY2011 awarded over \$35 million dollars in conservation program funds to landowners.

The Eaton Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service would like to thank the many landowners in Eaton County who have planned and/or 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 to you, please call the office at (517) 543-1539, ext. 3.

## NRCS ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR EATON COUNTY

### Tim Redder, District Conservationist

Fiscal Year 2011 was a successful year for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Eaton County. Tim Redder is the District Conservationist and has been working in the county now for almost two years. Ruben Torres was recently hired as the new Soil Conservationist and joined the office in December 2011. NRCS has been working with several landowners implementing contracts and completing practices throughout the year. Below is a list of the practices that were completed through NRCS programs in FY 2011:

- Watering Facilities for prescribed grazing systems (7 no.)
- Pipeline for prescribed grazing systems (1,500 feet)
- Residue Management (1,500 acres)
- Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans Written (3 - covering approx. 1,200 acres)
- Prescribed Grazing for livestock (210 acres)
- Livestock Stream Crossing (5 no.)
- Pest Management for row crops (2,545 acres)
- Nutrient Management for row crops (612 acres)
- Wetland Restoration (16 acres)
- Animal Waste Storage Facility (1 no.)
- Animal Waste Storage Cover (1 no.)
- Composting Facility (1 no.)
- Roof Runoff Structure (7 no.)
- Conservation Cover for Wildlife (20 acres)
- Pest Management Plans Written (5 – covering approx. 3,500 acres)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) plans written (8 – covering approx. 140 acres)

## Land Use

ECD recognizes the importance of land use patterns and the protection of natural resources and is dedicated to serving as a resource for local planning officials. The Greening Mid Michigan Project identified the areas in Ingham, Eaton, and Clinton Counties that have a high potential for conservation value. ECD worked with local planning groups to develop a green infrastructure vision for the community. This is a great way for local municipalities and townships to work together and plan for future green space, trail linkages, and funding opportunities. The GIS maps that were produced as part of the project are valuable tools for master planning efforts and future development.

ECD staff serve on the Eaton County Farmland Preservation Board and review and approve PA 116 applications for farmland agreement. We are currently partnering on the Healthy Waters Rural Pride Committee to seek additional opportunities for farmland preservation at a regional level. The Middle Grand River Watershed Planning Project is working closely with local townships, cities, and villages in developing the management plan. This plan, once approved, will provide these communities with the opportunity to leverage additional grant funds for water quality projects.



## 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.

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) is an innovative, proactive program that helps farms of all sizes and all commodities voluntarily prevent or minimize agricultural pollution risks. District staff worked with 23 land owners to complete environmental risk assessments, discuss best management practices, and develop emergency plans on farms. In 2011 there were 8 MAEAP verifications and 125 risk reductions to reduce point and nonpoint source pollution.

The Annual Fall Farm Tour September 8<sup>th</sup> had 31 attendees, and collected 9167lbs of unwanted pesticides. This year's tour was a cooperation between Eaton, Barry, Ingham and Ionia Conservation Districts, Clean Sweep, MSU Extension, USDA NRCS, CPS in Sunfield, and Greenstone Farm Credit Services. Participants attended a MAEAP Phase one Meeting and learned about current best management practices while visiting demonstration sites throughout Eaton and Ingham counties. Topics that were focused on included: bulk fertilizer storage, USDA Farm Bill Programs and incentives, Cover Crops, Pre-Sidedress Nitrogen Testing and Nitrogen Stewardship, Farm Energy Audits, and farmland preservation.



## Campbell Conservationist of the Year

The “Conservationist of the Year” award will be given to Erin Campbell at the 2011 Annual Meeting in appreciation of her dedication to Eaton County’s natural resources.

As the coordinator for the Greater Lansing Committee for Stormwater Management, Erin provides participating Phase II stormwater (MS4) communities with guidance, outreach, and hosts workshops for continued education. She has created materials such as brochures, news releases and more for communities to use for non-point source pollution which are available at [www.mywatersheds.org](http://www.mywatersheds.org). Annually, she organizes the Children’s Water Festival at Michigan State University that educates up to 2,200 students on water issues. In the last several years, Erin has teamed up with the Eaton Conservation District and MSU-Institute of Water Research to secure watershed planning funding for the Middle Grand River and the Red Cedar River Watersheds.

## A & S Farms—Cooperator of the Year

A&S Farms will receive the “Cooperator of the Year” award for 2011. The Birsens, along with father Robert King, run a 180 acre goat farm that is part of the Michigan Specialty Meats Cooperative. All of their goats are pasture raised without the use of steroids or hormones. Environmental stewardship and responsible care for their animals and the land they are raised on has always been a mission of the farm. The Birsens also run an all natural soap and lotion business called Udderly Magic Goat’s Milk Soaps and Lotions.

A&S Farm was the first farm in Eaton County to receive a Livestock Verification under the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). Working with USDA – NRCS, the Birsens have implemented watering facilities, fence, pipeline, roof runoff, composting facility, pasture planting and prescribed grazing. These practices have been all been completed during the last several months through the USDA Farm Bill Environmental Quality Incentives Program.





## GLAS and Saari Educators of the Year

This year, we are announcing two recipients of the “Conservation Educator of the Year” award. Aaron Saari from Maple Valley Jr/Sr High School and the Greater Lansing Adventist School (GLAS) in Delta Township will be receiving the award. This award is given annually to spotlight the phenomenal job that our local educators are doing in the community.

Aaron Saari has been a teacher for 15 years, of which 12 were at Maple Valley. He teaches Plant and Animal Biology, Biology, Natural Resources, and Agribusiness Management. He serves as the FFA advisor and is a member of the MVHS Thornapple Bridge/Trail Committee. Mr. Saari’s students have participated in a number of natural resource projects including: the Thornapple River clean up, Macro-invertebrate studies in the Thornapple River, tree plantings in Vermontville and Nashville as well as participating in the Adopt a Highway Program. Students have also used the Eaton Conservation District Property on Mason Road to study soil, water and wildlife as parts of class projects and FFA contest preparation.

The Greater Lansing Adventist School is also being recognized for the contributions of their students and teachers during volunteer work days. This private school includes 60 students from prek-10th grade. GLAS places a priority on community service to teach students how important it is to volunteer their time and efforts into the community. It teaches them selflessness, and to give back to nature. GLAS volunteers every Friday for Bible Labs Class.

Over the past two years, GLAS has volunteered on multiple ECD conservation projects including planting a raingarden, pulling invasive garlic mustard, riverbank restoration, and planting a pollinator garden.

The Eaton Conservation District would like to thank our winners for all of their efforts above and beyond regular teaching duties. Their dedication benefits not only our natural resources but has instilled pride and vision in the school community.



The Eaton Conservation District received a 319 non-point source grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to complete a watershed management plan for the Middle Grand River. Watershed Management Plans serve as guides for communities to protect and improve water quality. Located in Mid-Michigan, the Middle Grand River watershed encompasses approximately 258 square miles (~165,000 acres) in Clinton, Ingham, Eaton, and Ionia counties. ECD staff are currently working with stakeholders to identify existing water quality and land use data to identify gaps for future data collection. Water quality data will be compiled into watershed wide GIS maps.

Through a grant with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, ECD oversees promotion and updating/editing for a statewide water quality website [www.miwaterstewardship.org](http://www.miwaterstewardship.org). In 2011, there were 7,357 visitors to the site for a grand total of 597,542 page views. The website includes games, lesson plans, tools for homeowners, conservation courses, and more.

ECD partnered with the City of Charlotte, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Maple Hill Cemetery, Charlotte Country Club, and the US Fish & Wildlife Service to continue efforts to restore the quality of Butternut Creek – a tributary of the Thornapple River. This year a 2-stage ditch was installed at the Fitch Beach airport to restore the channel to a natural design. Two undersized culverts and an impoundment were removed at the Charlotte County Club to improve stream flow and allow fish passage.

ECD serves on planning committees for the Charlotte Wellhead Team, Statewide MAEAP advisory team, Thornapple River Watershed Committee, and Battle Creek Restoration Project.



## Wildlife 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 other



opportunities. We also provide trees and educational trunks for local schools to learn more about natural resources. In March ECD staff hosted the annual wildlife workshop with speakers from USDA-NRCS, MDNR, Pheasants Forever, Quality Deer Management, and Ducks Unlimited. This provides the public with the opportunities learn about a variety of programs and activities.

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 and a Great Plains No-Till Drill for agricultural plantings.

ECD is managing a 35 acre parcel of property for the MDNR in Vermontville. This year, ECD worked with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to plant nine upland acres of the site to a mix of warm season native grasses and wildflowers. We also had a tree planting day with students from the Maple Valley Jr/Sr High school along the riparian area.

The Michigan Arbor Day Program is run out of the ECD office from a grant from the MDNR. At the 2011 Arbor Day Celebration we had 54 classes from 29 schools participate (1,168 students). Through the Go Green Youth Challenge program and sponsorships, we were able to complete 9 community tree plantings of 481 container trees.

ECD partnered to help organize the Charlotte River Conservation Day and Thornapple River Clean-ups and with volunteer help picked up trash, planted trees, and pulled invasive species. A new partnership with the MDNR to enroll landowners in the Hunter Access Program has just begun. This program provides hunting access to the public and a rental payment to the landowner. In 2011 staff enrolled two farms (149 acres) in the Hunter Access Program.

## 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 five core strategies are crucial to the strength of our organization. In 2011 staff and board members attended trainings on strategic planning, erosion measurement, plant Identification, citizen planner, nutrient and pest management, conservation planning, cover crop, fraud detection, and more. Board and staff continue to seek additional and diverse funding mechanisms including the online auction and 5K fundraisers, State, and Federal Grants, and partnerships with businesses.

ECD has been very successful in utilizing volunteers for events and continuous internships. This year over **1350 volunteer hours** were spent helping out on district programs. These hours **are valued at \$28,836**. Volunteers help with filing, the tree sale fundraiser, riparian plantings, invasive pulling, display events, water quality monitoring, and more!

Reaching stakeholders through a variety of events and outreach is important to the Conservation District. In 2011 ECD took a big step forward with Facebook, Twitter, and the use of e-newsletters. Newsletters, events, and workshops are a great opportunity to educate the public about wildlife habitat and invasive species. In 2011, ECD sent 3 paper newsletters, 14 e-newsletters, and published over 40 news releases. We have been able to use electronic surveys to get feedback and tailor programs and resources. Staff attend meetings and set-up display events for community, farming, and natural resource concerns. Partnerships with stakeholder groups such as Eaton County Farm Bureau, Stewardship Network, Middle Grand River Organization of Watersheds, Habitat Groups, recreation groups, and many more are crucial.