

**"YOUR GATEWAY
TO NATURAL
RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT"**



The Van Buren Conservation District would like to thank everyone who purchased trees through the 2006 Tree Seedling Sale!

Nearly 13,000 trees were planted in Van Buren County as a result of the District Tree Sale!!

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How to contact us!

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Visit us online!
<http://www.vbco.org/vbcd.asp>



Van Buren Conservation District

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New faces at the Conservation District!

The Conservation District may have changed a little since you last stopped by! Kyle Townsend came on board as the new AmeriCorps member in January of 2006. In March The District hired Amy Lockhart as the new District Administrator, replacing Executive Director Tricia Bizoukas who had accepted a position with Farm Bureau in Lansing, MI. This spring also saw the retirement of two long serving board members Fred Garrod and Carl Druskovich. Appointments were made for their replacements and the board has welcomed Bryan Cronenwett and Mike Rainey as its newest members.



District staff (from left) Amy Lockhart, Administrator; Erin Fuller, Black River Watershed Coordinator; Kyle Townsend, AmeriCorps Member; Kyle Mead, Groundwater Technician.

Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program

With the help of the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program (MGSP), the Farm*A*Syst tool, and the Crop*A*Syst tool, farmers can evaluate farming practices in a confidential one on one assessment.

The Farm*A*Syst is an evaluation of practices done on your farm, while the Crop*A*Syst evaluates field practices. With the help of your local groundwater technician the Farm*A*Syst and Crop*A*Syst zero in on possible pollution sources that may occur in everyday farming practices and then offers alternative practices that could potentially save you time and

money. Upon completion of a Farm*A*Syst or Crop*A*Syst the farmer can apply for four (4) Restricted Use Pesticide (RUP) Credits. It's common for the public to think the Conservation Districts and its programs are required to turn people into the 'environmental police'. In actuality when you work with your Conservation District and its programs, such as MGSP, nothing is reported. Our goals are to give people the chance to fix problems before the issue becomes regulated. Along with being eligible for RUP Credits the producer can apply for cost share items and practices to help in reducing the risks found while completing the Farm*A*Syst.

The idea behind MGSP cost sharing practices is that a farmer will be more likely to try something new if it is free or at a reduced cost. MGSP feels that after the practice is given a chance, the producer will see the benefits both environmentally and economically and will be more likely to continue with it year after year.

To schedule a Farm*A*Syst evaluation and apply for cost share call Kyle Mead at the Van Buren Conservation District. The phone number at the Van Buren Conservation District is (269)657-4030 x 5

Black River Watershed Project Moves Ahead

By: Erin Fuller
Black River Watershed Coordinator



Left: The Black River at the Kal-Haven bridge in South Haven.

Landowners in the Black River Watershed can receive discounted rates when renting Van Buren Conservation District Equipment, such as the no-till drill and Brillion Seeder. Call the District office for details.

The Van Buren Conservation District has recently been awarded a grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to continue the Black River Watershed Project. The District worked from October 2002 to April 2005 to create a Watershed Management Plan. With the receipt of this new grant, the focus will be on implementing the Black River Watershed Management Plan.

This three-year project is funded through the federal Clean Water Act. The overall goal of the project is to implement long-term protection and improvements

to water quality in the Black River Watershed. This will be achieved through activities such as restoring eroding stream banks, providing long term protection of water quality through local land use policies and preservation of our natural areas, and providing information and education on water quality issues for watershed residents, municipalities and businesses. These activities will build a foundation to continue to preserve our Black River as a resource for future generations.

The Black River Watershed encompasses approximately 290 square miles in Allegan and Van Buren Counties. Three main branches of the river converge and flow into Lake Michigan at South Haven. Primary water quality concerns in the watershed are

Right: South Branch of the Black River.



erosion and sedimentation, nutrient loading, and development issues.

Local involvement and support is crucial to the success of this project. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact project coordinator Erin Fuller at the Van Buren Conservation District office: (269) 657-4030 x 5 or erin.fuller@mi.nacdn.net. For more information, visit our project website at www.vbco.org/blackriver_2.asp.

News from the USDA Service Center

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (known as EQIP) is the most popular of the programs the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers. EQIP is a voluntary program that assists producers with financial incentives to protect the environment through the implementation of conservation

practices. There are several conservation practices available for cost-share in the EQIP program depending on the farm operation and the existing resource concerns. There are eligibility requirements and a conservation plan is required as the base document from which an EQIP contract is derived. NRCS provides assistance to develop a conservation plan. There is currently a waiting list for conservation plans in Van Buren County. The planning

and contracting portion of EQIP is not something that is done overnight and it can take up to a year to complete the entire process.

If you are interested in learning more about EQIP, please contact Steve Bare or Jeff Douglas at the USDA Service Center in Paw Paw to set up an

appointment.
(269) 657-4220 x3



Paw Paw River Watershed will benefit from MDEQ grant

For the past two years, a group of stakeholders has been meeting and talking about efforts to increase awareness, education, and protection of the Paw Paw River. Now it will no longer be just talk. With a \$216,087 grant from MDEQ, the Southwestern Michigan Commission (SWMC) will be facilitating a project over the next two years that will result in a Watershed Management Plan for the Paw Paw River Watershed. Along with this planning effort, there will be several educational opportunities (such as

workshops and newsletters) for residents, landowners and municipal officials in the watershed. Numerous partners to the grant will be contributing over \$55,000 of local in-kind match. There will be efforts to expand and include other partners in the watershed planning effort. Marcy Colclough, Senior Planner at SWMC says she "is amazed at the level of interest and synergy surrounding this project. So many people are on board and supportive of the efforts. I have never seen this level of interest in a water-

shed project from such a diverse group of individuals, agencies, and organizations. I really believe that it is a testament to the incredible resources and natural areas in the Paw Paw River Watershed. People just love this river system and want to see it protected and managed well."

If you would like to be involved in the Paw Paw River Watershed Planning Project, please contact Marcy at (269)925-1137 x25 or colcloughm@swmicomm.org

Interested in learning more about your local watersheds and watershed management?

Van Buren Conservation District, in partnership with the Paw Paw River Watershed Project and the Black River Watershed Project will be hosting a **Watershed Short course.**

For more information, please contact the Conservation District.

Don't move firewood!

By Kelly Goward
District Forester— Allegan and Ottawa Conservation Districts

Summer is here and that means that many of us, myself included, are gearing up to go camping. Something Michigan campers need to be aware of this year is the current restrictions on the movement of firewood. There is a statewide quarantine banning the movement of untreated deciduous firewood out of 39 quarantined areas in the Lower Peninsula. Additionally, no untreated deciduous firewood may be moved from any part of the Lower Peninsula into the Upper Peninsula, neighboring states or across the St. Clair River. Violations of this quarantine are subject to penalties.

This quarantine was imposed in an attempt to reduce the spread of the exotic emerald ash borer (EAB). EAB, native to Asia, was first discovered in southeast Michigan in the summer of 2002. Since then, approximately 15 million ash trees have been damaged or

killed in Michigan. Many federal, state and local agencies have been working cooperatively to understand the nature of EAB, identify where it has spread, research control options, and try to stop its spread.

One important way that EAB has spread unnaturally is through human movement of firewood. According to the Michigan Department of Agriculture, nearly all of the infestations outside of the core infestation in southeast Michigan have been traced to the movement of firewood. Many other woodland pests can also be spread to new areas by hitching a ride on firewood. Because of this and to ensure compliance with the quarantine, it is best to not transport any firewood around, into and out of Michigan.

When you go camping, buy firewood locally; do not bring it from home. Use all of the wood you buy; do not leave any behind unburned. If you have already transported firewood from another area, burn it immediately; do not dump it,

leave it or take it home. By promoting awareness of EAB and how it can be transported in firewood, hopefully we will all do our part to help prevent the spread of this exotic pest to uninfested areas, which currently includes Ottawa, Allegan and Cass Counties in Southwest Michigan.



For more information about EAB and the quarantine, visit <http://www.michigan.gov/eab>, <http://www.emeraldashborer.info>, or contact your local Conservation District: Van Buren (269)657-4030 ext. 5. Michigan Conservation Districts are local units of state government that promote the wise use and management of natural resources.

Moving firewood is the leading cause of Emerald Ash Borer spread outside the core infestation area in Southeast Michigan.



Above: Adult Emerald Ash Borer

Below: Emerald Ash Borer Larva



Conservation District Calendar



August

10 Groundwater Stewardship
Team Meeting

15 VBCD Board Meeting

16 Paw Paw River Watershed
Steering Committee

29 Agrichemical Containment
Workshop

September

16 Emerald Ash Borer
Workshop

19 VBCD Board Meeting

20 MGSP on farm field day

21 Black River Watershed
Steering Committee

October

Tuesday evenings– Watershed
Short course

17 VBCD Board Meeting

Your Gateway to Natural Resource Management

Residential Groundwater Stewardship

The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) administers the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program (MGSP) and implements groundwater stewardship programming throughout Michigan for residential residents with the AmeriCorps program, and agriculture producers with groundwater technicians.

AmeriCorps members provide the following: assist landowners/homeowners with completing a residential groundwater risk assessment known as Home*a*Syst, provide education about groundwater protection to



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The Groundwater Foundation

community groups (often through presentations), provide education about groundwater protection to school groups, and participate in community service projects.

For those concerned about your groundwater then a Home*a*Syst is for you. A Home*a*Syst is a free and

confidential in-depth risk assessment that can be used to evaluate your home and property for health as well as environmental risks. The topics include site assessment, drinking water wells, household trash management, storm water management, septic systems, yard and garden care, household hazardous products and liquid fuels. With this program there is also a possibility of funds to help close abandoned wells.

For information call the Van Buren Conservation District at 269-657-4030 extension 5.

Visit our website!!
<http://www.vbco.org/vbcd.asp>

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