



The Conservation Connection

Berrien County Conservation District



“Farm Field Day @ Vineyard 2121”

Invitation Open to All



Berrien Conservation District is pleased to announce an educational field day that will be held on Wednesday, **July 15th from 4-8:30 pm.**

The On-Farm Agriculture Field Day is sponsored by a partnership with Berrien County Farm Bureau, Berrien Conservation District, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The host farm and location for this year’s event is at the **Jeff & Debbie Pallas Farm at 2121 Kerlikowske Road, Benton Harbor**

Topics that will be covered:

- Transportation Programs - Craig Anderson, MI Farm Bureau
 - Fuel Tank Standards by Crystal Flash Spokesperson
 - Tissue Sampling & IPM in Fruit, Mark Longstroth & Brad Baughman, MSUE
 - Wetlands: Learn firsthand how one is determined for USDA by John Lingle
 - MAEAP walk through with Josh Appleby, MDARD
 - EQIP & CSP Programs by Sherman Reed, NRCS
 - Easement Programs by Ryan Postema, Chikaming Open Lands
 - Farm Service Agency Updates by Dan Brauer, FSA
 - Michigan/Berrien Farm Bureau Updates by Sarah Pion & Sara Seyfred
- This event qualifies as a MAEAP Phase 1 Meeting

Optional: Be prepared to walk through a vineyard as tissue testing is discussed, a wetland area to see how determinations are made, and around the farmstead viewing conservation practices.

A fried chicken dinner is included. **Cost is \$10**

RSVP by July 10 to Berrien Conservation District at 269-471-9111 x3

Attendees will be given free soil & grape tissue sampling test kits (\$44 value) courtesy of National Grape Cooperative. Event Sponsored by:



The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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District Board Meetings

Second Monday of each month, 12:00 pm (noon)

District Board Members

- Bonnie Kuehl, Chairman
- Terry Holloway, Vice-Chair
- Brandy Wise-Tenter, Secretary
- Ernie Klug, Treasurer
- Alan Martin, Director

District Staff

- Nancy Carpenter, Administrator
- Suzanne Forraht, MAEAP Technician

NRCS Staff

- Sherman Reed, District Conservationist
- Mike Stickle, Soil Conservation Technician

Hunting Access Program offers incentives for landowners

From the Department of Natural Resources

Attention landowners: Looking to make the most of your land? You can support local hunting traditions and economy, improve your land, and get paid to do it! Consider enrolling your lands in the Hunting Access Program, which provides private land hunting opportunities for hunters in Southern Michigan. Landowners with at least 40 contiguous hunting acres are eligible to enroll.

Michigan's Hunting Access Program (HAP) was created in 1977 to increase public hunting opportunities in southern Michigan where 97 percent of the land base is privately owned. Landowners enrolled in HAP receive an annual payment, up to \$25 an acre, for allowing hunters to access their lands. HAP is one of the oldest dedicated private lands public access programs in the nation and it provides access to quality hunting lands close to urban properties. Using funds from the new hunting license package and a new United States Department of Agriculture grant, the DNR, in collaboration with Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and local Conservation Districts, plans to continue expanding the program over the next three years.

According to DNR Wildlife Biologist, Mike Parker, "Providing access to hunting lands that are close to home is critical for supporting Michigan's strong hunting heritage. Our commitment to providing access has more than tripled the number of farms enrolled in HAP the past three years. We now have over 140 farms and nearly 16,000 acres available for public hunting.

Parker continued, "HAP is also good for the economy. Hunters taking trips to HAP lands contribute 1.7 million dollars annually to Michigan's economy. The majority of the HAP hunter trips are only 25 miles from the hunter's home, making HAP lands extremely accessible and close to home."

Landowners can choose which types of hunting are allowed on their lands. Hunting options include:

-All Hunting -Youth & Apprentice Hunting Only -Small Game Only -Deer Only

Landowners may choose more than one option, such as deer and turkey hunting only. Maximum payments will be given for All Hunting or Youth & Apprentice Hunting options.

In order to control the number of hunters using HAP lands at any one time, hunters are required to register to hunt each time they visit the property. The landowner can select either a mandatory registration at their home or a hunter self-registration box, which will be provided and installed. The maximum number of hunters allowed on the property is determined by the total acreage, as well as the habitat type. Leases are on a two year period, with annual payments made each spring.

To ensure landowner and hunter satisfaction, HAP offers landowner liability protection. Public Act 451 of 1994 addresses the concerns some landowners have over sharing access to their land. In addition, HAP lands are patrolled by conservation officers, with an increased focus on patrolling during the busy fall hunting season.

Visit www.michigan.gov/hap to learn more about the program and to see a current list of private lands available for hunting in Michigan. The HAP webpage includes details about enrolled properties, including types of hunting allowed and aerial photos of the properties. Interested landowners can contact the DNR employees Mike Parker (517) 641-4903 x 228 or Holly Vaughn (313) 396-6863, or can contact Nancy Carpenter (269) 471-9111 x3 at the Berrien Conservation District.



New Board Member

The Conservation District is pleased to announce that Brandy Wise-Tenter was elected to the Board of Directors at the election held in February. Brandy replaces Aaron Molter who's term expired. Brandy is employed at Whirlpool and has an MBA from Baker College. She is married with a son and resides in Bainbridge Township. Brandy feels it is extremely important to preserve our natural resources for future generations to enjoy, just as she has growing up in Michigan's great southwest.

The Conservation Districts would like to give a special thank you to Aaron Molter for his dedication to conservation by serving as director.

Awards Presented at Annual Meeting February 19th

Rambo Inc. wins 2014 MAEAP Environmental Stewardship Award



Each year the Environmental Stewardship Award is given to a MAEAP verified producer that has gone over and above addressing environmental risks on the farm. Verne and Marilyn Rambo of Rambo Inc. received that award. Some of the practices they had to address were to pour a concrete pad for mix/load of pesticides & fuel transfer, soil testing, emergency planning, identifying sensitive areas, and improving storage for items such as fertilizer and used oil. In the spring of last year, the farm was verified in all systems that applied to them: Cropping, Greenhouse and 2 Farmsteads. Presently, 4th generation Rambo Inc. farms nearly 1,000 acres of grapes, blueberries and nursery crops including small fruit plants, vegetable roots, and perennials. Rambo Inc. strongly feels that as a business involved in agriculture, their responsibility is to focus not only on providing locally, but to also have a global mentality.

(Pictured: Verne & Marilyn Rambo, and Ed Kretchman, from Berrien County Farm Bureau, who sponsored the award.)

Jeff & Deb Pallas win 2014 Conservation Farm of the Year

Jeff and Deb Pallas of Pallas Farms accepted the annual Conservation Farm of the Year Award for 2014. Each year the Berrien Conservation District recognizes landowners who do an outstanding job of preserving natural resources and using best management practices on their land. This award is based on conservation practices implemented and/or maintained by a local farmer. The Pallas' started working with NRCS in 2011. Since then, they have implemented many conservation practices, including a heavy use area protection, nutrient management, pest management, cover crops, critical area planting, irrigation water management, an agrichemical handling facility, water well decommissioning, and a fueling facility.



(Pictured: Jeff and Debbie Pallas, this award was sponsored by Greenstone Farm Credit Services.)

Conservation Client Gateway

What is Conservation Client Gateway? It is an NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) website that provides secure access to conservation plans, practice implementation schedules, financial applications and contracts, documents and payment information. Instead of driving to your field office multiple times, Conservation Client Gateway enables you to request assistance, sign documents and interact with NRCS field staff online. NRCS staff is available in field offices to work with you face-to-face – this online tool just provides another option.

Benefits - Using Conservation Client Gateway can reduce the amount of trips you need to take to your local field office. Need to request assistance? Track a payment? Review your conservation plan? Conservation Client Gateway is available 24/7, enabling you to choose the time that works best for you.

Voluntary - Using Conservation Client Gateway isn't required. You are free to continue working with NRCS as you always have. Now, you simply have more options. You can drive to or call the field office for assistance, or log onto the Conservation Client Gateway. Choose what is most convenient for you.

Who Can Sign Up - Conservation Client Gateway is available to agricultural producers. In the future, it will be available to business entities and on mobile devices.

Getting Started - Just a few steps will get you started on Conservation Client Gateway. For step-by-step instructions on getting started, you can visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway

Help and Support- Step-by-step instructions are available online. If you need additional help, personal assistance is available at (970)372-4200. NRCS field office staff is always available to assist you with conservation questions.

**Berrien County
Conservation District**

3334 Edgewood Road
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Phone: 269-471-9111

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Upcoming Events/Notices

On-Farm Agriculture Field Day/MAEAP Phase 1 Meeting: July 15th from 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm. Location: Vineyard 2121, Jeff & Debbie Pallas Farm at 2121 Kerlikowske Rd., Benton Harbor, MI 49022. Cost is \$10. Registration is required. Call Berrien Conservation District to register at 269-471-9111 x3.

USDA Farm Service Agency Crop Acreage Reporting: July 15th is the deadline for producers to report their spring seeded crops. If producers do not report their spring seeded crops and sign their acreage report by the July 15th deadline, each farm that is reported late will be assessed a late file fee of a minimum of \$46 per farm.

Berrien County Youth Fair August 17th through the 22nd. Please visit the Berrien Conservation District and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Booth in the Ag Expo/USA Building. Pick up literature on a wide range of conservation subjects from using rain barrels to soil erosion control and more.

River Rescue: Volunteer Stream Cleanup, August 1st. This event will be for paddlers only. If you have a kayak or canoe and would like to participate or have seen trash in a stream please call the Berrien Conservation District at 269-471-9111 x3. We are looking for locations at this time.

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) currently has a noncompetitive signup for enrolling land into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Some of the practices include: pollinator planting, filter strips, grass waterways, constructing wetlands, windbreaks, and shelterbelts. Please contact the FSA office for more information at 269-471-9111 ext 2.

All Berrien Conservation District programs and services prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital or family status, political belief, sexual orientation, or disability.