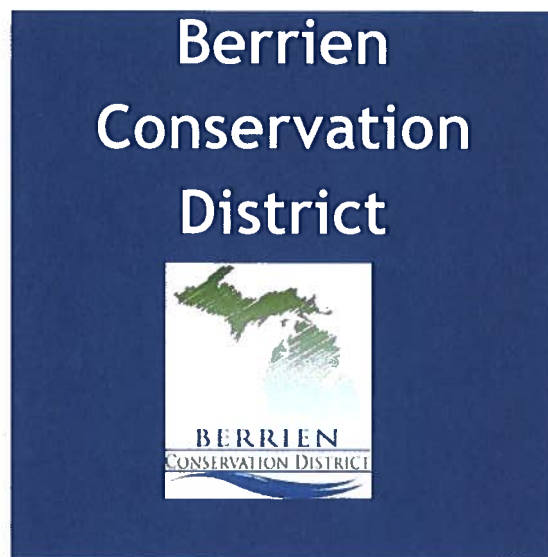


A Newsletter for Ox Creek Watershed Landowners and Renters



MAY 2018

Conservation Farm of the Year Award Winners!

Mike and Kim Schmaltz and Girls of Poplar Lawn Farm were the Conservation Farm of the Year award winners at the Berrien Conservation District's Annual Meeting, held February 22nd. Pictured above is son-in-law Josh Seyfred, Mike Schmaltz, Kim Schmaltz, and daughter Sara Seyfred. They farm a total of 200 acres and raise grapes, corn, soybeans, pumpkins and squash. A few of the practices that the family has done with the assistance of the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) is to install an Agrichemical Handling Facility, a Heavy Use Area Protection Practice, and an approved Fueling Facility. On the farm they also practice Nutrient Management, Integrated Pest Management, Irrigation Water Management, Residue and Tillage Management, plant Cover Crops, and use No-Till practices on part of the acres. In addition to all this, they achieved MAEAP verification in Farmstead, Livestock (horses), and Cropping Systems in February. (See more information on MAEAP on page 2)



An Environmental Stewardship Award for MAEAP was also announced on February 22nd. **Randy and Heather Schmaltz** from **Schmaltz Farms LLC** were MAEAP verified in 2017 in the Farmstead and Cropping systems. They are 3rd generation farmers and started Schmaltz Farms LLC in 2010. They farm 300 acres of corn and 90 acres of grapes in Baroda. They were honored for applying surface and groundwater protection practices on their farm. They also worked with the NRCS and installed an Agrichemical Handling Facility, Heavy Use Area Protection around that building, and a fueling facility. They completed pest and nutrient management plans as well. Also completed were emergency planning, water testing, and other MAEAP required practices on the farm. Congratulations to all of our award winning farmers!



For anyone interested in pursuing environmental practices on the farm, the following is a partial list of other available practices through the NRCS for reducing sediment & nutrient loading, optimizing groundwater use, and enhancing fish & wildlife habitat: Wetland Reserve Easements, Drainage Water Management, Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, Conservation Cover, Cover Crops, Critical Area Planting, Filter Strips, Grassed Waterways, Prescribed Grazing, Residue & Tillage Management: No-till or Reduced-till, Riparian Forest Buffer, Access Control, Stream Crossing, Streambank & Shoreline Protection, and Fish & Wildlife Habitat Management Plans. Call 269-471-9111 x3 for more information on these practices. Funding may be available through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Landowners & Renters in the Ox Creek Watershed are eligible to apply. Reducing sedimentation in the Ox Creek is a goal that can be achieved!

"This project has been funded wholly or in part through Michigan department of Environmental Quality's Nonpoint Source Program by the United States Environmental Protection Agency."



Call 269-471-9111 x3 or visit us at 3334 Edgewood Rd, Berrien Springs for more information.

Upcoming Conservation District Events

Native Plant Presentation & Native Plant Sale

Join us Wednesday, May 23rd at the Bridgman Public Library, 4460 Lake Street, Bridgman, MI from 2 pm to 4 pm to hear plant expert Vern Stephens explain the benefits of native plants.

After the presentation plants will be available for purchase from 4 pm to 7 pm. For more information call us at

269-471-9111 x3.



Free Drinking Well Water Screening

The Berrien Conservation District and MAEAP will sponsor a free drinking well water screening on Wednesday, June 20th and Thursday, June 21st from 8am to 4:00pm at the Berrien Conservation District Office at 3334 Edgewood Road, Berrien Springs. Samples from drinking water wells will be screened for nitrate and nitrite. Please see our website at www.berriencd.org for directions on how to take the sample and to download the form.

For questions call 269-471-9111 x3 or email Suzanne.Forraht@mi.nacdnet.net **Collect samples just before bringing them to be sampled. Samples must be less than 48 hours old for a valid nitrate result.**

Summer Farm Field Day @ Tabor Hill Winery

Watch for details for our summer on-farm field day, "Taking 2018 to New Heights" on Tuesday, July 10th from 5-9pm. The event will be held at Tabor Hill Winery in Buchanan, MI. The evening will include dinner in the restaurant (seating is limited) then heading out to the vineyard for some great informational sessions including: Bluebird Ag Drone Demonstrations - Spot Spraying and Cover Crop Seed Applications, Understanding and Manipulating Weed/Crop Interactions, Herbicide Resistance, IPM in Vineyards, etc.

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program

Producers in Berrien County continue to be actively involved in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) by voluntarily reducing environmental risks to ground and surface water on their farms. A total of 12 new MAEAP verifications occurred on local farms in the last year. Several assessments continue to take place each year. Some of the various assessments include the Farm*A*Syst, Crop*A*Syst (includes Greenhouse, Nursery, Orchards, Vegetables, Row Crops, etc.) Livestock*A*Syst, and the newest edition of the Forest/Wetland/Habitat A*Syst. As a result of the assessments completed, numerous on-farm risk reduction deliverables took place in the county. This environmental assurance indicates that their farms are in conformance with state and federal regulations, Right-to-Farm GAAMPs, and that they are continuing to protect Michigan's natural resources for future generations.

What is the process to get verified? **Phase 1:** Learn by attending a qualified educational session, or view online to learn about the free and voluntary program and the regulations that affect you. **Phase 2:** With the assistance of a technician, complete an on-farm risk assessment to address the environmental impacts of your farm. **Phase 3:** Upon your request, schedule a third-party verification from the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development who will verify that your operation has met the requirement of Phase 1 & 2 and the farm is following the Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs). Call our office at 269-471-9111 x3 for more information about MAEAP.

Why get verified?

- Reduce your legal and environmental risks and assure Right-to-Farm protection for your farm.
- Show your peers, neighbors and community that environmental stewardship is important to you.
- Balance efficient production and sound environmental practices to grow your business and protect our air, land and water.
- Help ensure safe storage of fuel, fertilizer and pesticides.
- Develop emergency plans to prepare for the unexpected and protect you, your employees and first responders.



Interested landowners can seek environmental verification through MAEAP (Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program). It is a free and voluntary program available through the Berrien Conservation District that works with landowners to minimize potential pollution risks. From greenhouses to dairy farms to forested lands, there is a place in MAEAP for everyone. The four systems available for verification are

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.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.