



# The Conservation Connection

Berrien County Conservation District

## Conservation District offers SAFE FOOD Risk Assessments



**Berrien Conservation District** is pleased to announce acceptance of a grant through the State of Michigan to offer technical assistance to producers of Fresh Market Fruit and Vegetables for the purpose of conducting a safe food risk assessment. Berrien Conservation District has been one of the counties to participate in the pilot program to perform Safe Food Risk Assessments and provide education on the program.

The new Safe Food Risk Assessment has been developed and is aligned with USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) requirements, but is small farm scale-appropriate. The purpose of the project is to encourage more farmer adoption of cost-effective food safety management practices that can be implemented and maintained by those producers not currently seeking a *certified food safety audit*. It is designed to educate producers, evaluate on-farm practices, provide food safety technical assistance and recognize small/locally grown fruit and vegetable growers who follow safe food practices. This is a free, voluntary program and will be delivered by a trained Conservation District technician. A ***Safe Food Farm Certificate of Completion*** will be awarded when a participating grower implements an action plan to correct potential food

safety risks identified on the farm and is able to demonstrate or document conformance with at least 80 percent of the key food-safety management practices. The program will enhance grower awareness and adoption of safe food management practices, as well as improve their competitiveness in the marketplace. Many grocery chains and institutional produce buyers have addressed consumer food-safety concerns by requiring a *Certified Food Safety Farm Audit* from their fresh produce growers and suppliers. A number of public and private organizations can assist producers who wish to have a certified audit. The Safe Food Risk Assessment is **not** for farms that require a certified food safety farm audit; however, the completion of the assessment will help prepare for a certified food-safety farm audit.

A successful completion of this assessment will support the growing public interest in healthy local foods.

For details about the program, or to make an appointment to conduct the assessment, contact Suzanne Forraht at the Berrien Conservation District at 269-471-9111 x121, or [suzanne.forraht@mi.nacdnet.net](mailto:suzanne.forraht@mi.nacdnet.net).

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### District Board Meetings

Second Monday of each month,  
7:00 pm

### District Board Members

- Bonnie Kuehl, Chairman
- Terry Holloway, Vice-Chair
- Aaron Molter, Secretary
- Ernie Klug, Treasurer
- Eira McDaniel, Director

### Staff

- Nancy Carpenter, Administrator
- Suzanne Forraht, Water Stewardship Technician

### NRCS Staff

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

## Hunting Access Program

Many Michigan farmers and landowners fail to realize the value of the wildlife resource available on their land. Allowing hunters on their property to hunt wildlife can be an added boost to landowner's income. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has been successfully leasing hunting rights on private land in southern Michigan since 1977 through the Hunting Access Program (HAP). HAP provides public hunting opportunities on private lands across southern Michigan. Greater than 90% of southern Michigan is privately owned, so providing hunting opportunities on private lands is critical to managing wildlife populations and protecting Michigan's hunting heritage. Berrien Conservation District is partnering with the DNR to provide the program here in Berrien County.

Using a new federal grant, **lease rates have been significantly increased**. HAP can now pay **up to** \$20/acre for high quality habitat, with an additional \$5 per acre incentive for habitat enrolled in a USDA program such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) or Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

To participate in HAP, a parcel must be at least 40 acres – of which 20% must be forest, wetland or grassland capable of providing good hunting opportunities. Payment to the landowner is based on the type of habitat on the land and hunting options allowed on the property.

Landowners do not have to live on the property or enroll the entire property. Working with Conservation District staff, landowners can set a limit to the number of hunters allowed on the land at one time. Landowners may also choose to have a mandatory check-in or a self check-in. They may choose one or more of the following hunting options: hunting for all legal species, youth and apprentice only, deer only, small game only or turkey only.

State statute provides liability protection to landowners enrolled in HAP.

If you are interested in controlling the deer population, marketing the wildlife resources on all or part of your land, or gaining an additional source of income from your land and would like to find out if your property would be eligible for the program, please contact Nancy Carpenter at the Berrien Conservation District, 269-471-9111 x5, [nancy.carpenter@mi.nacdnet.net](mailto:nancy.carpenter@mi.nacdnet.net) or Mike Parker at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, 517-641-4903 ext. 228, [parkerm5@michigan.gov](mailto:parkerm5@michigan.gov).

## Farm Service Agency announces new County Executive Director

Dan Brauer has been selected to replace Amy McNeil as Berrien County Executive Director. Amy took a position in her home county of Ottawa.

Dan graduated from Lake Superior State University with an Associates Degree in Natural Resources and a minor in Biology. Dan resides in Three Rivers, MI with his wife and son and has a baby on the way. Dan's farming experience includes dairy and swine. He also has experience installing food plots and planting native grasses for the Department of Natural Resources.

He is looking forward to working with the farmers of Berrien County.

Please feel free to call or stop by to see Dan as he is always happy to talk to members of the community. Farm Service Agency, 3334 Edgewood Road, Berrien Springs, MI 49103  
269-471-9111 x 104

# *Berrien Conservation District Annual Meeting, Dinner, & Elections*

*February 23, 2012 6:00 pm*

*Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center  
1791 Hillandale Road, Benton Harbor, MI 49022*

Program to include:

Conservation Farm of the Year Award

MAEAP Environmental Stewardship Award

Director Election

**Special Guest Speaker June (Grabemeyer) Moss**

Agricultural Economist

Natural Resources Conservation Service

*will speak on the topic of*

**"Challenges of Stewardship in Today's Farm Economy"**

*An award winning speaker, June will present a lively and informative look  
at how stewardship on the land can work in today's economy*

Reservations are required

Dinner - \$10.00 by TVB Catering

Includes choice of Sliced Turkey with Dressing or Vegetable Lasagna  
with sides, beverages, and dessert

Reserve your seat by February 17, 2012 by calling (269) 471-9111 ext 5

## Berrien County Conservation District

3334 Edgewood Road  
Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Phone: 269-471-9111  
Fax: 269-471-3773

We're on the web!

[www.berriencd.org](http://www.berriencd.org)

*Your land, your water, your Michigan*



PRESORTED STANDARD

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## Upcoming Events

**Southwest Michigan Horticulture Days, February 8th & 9th** at the Mendel Center, 2755 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor, Michigan 49022 The Michigan Grape Society and Michigan State University Extension in partnership with Lake Michigan College will host the annual Southwest Horticultural Days conference February 8 to 9 at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center, 2755 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor, Michigan. Registration begins at 8 a.m. both days and all educational sessions begin at 9 a.m., except for the Thursday morning grape session, which begins at 8:30 a.m. Registration is \$30 at the door and includes lunch. For more information contact Extension at 269-944-4126.

**Berrien Conservation District Annual Meeting and Dinner, February 23rd**, 6 p.m. at the Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center, 1791 Hillandale Road, Benton Harbor, MI 49022. Elections for directors will be held. June Moss, Natural Resources Conservation Service Economist will be the main speaker. June will present an informative and lively outlook on the topic of "Challenges of Stewardship in Today's Farm Economy". June is originally from Cass County and is an award winning speaker. Cost to attend and for the dinner is \$10. Please RSVP by February 17th. 269-471-9111 x5

**Low Impact Development: Planning and Designing for a Clean Water Future Workshop, March 1st** 5:30 PM– 8:30 PM, Harbert Community Church, 6444 Harbert Road, Sawyer, MI \$5.00 registration fee. Dinner provided. View full agenda and register on-line by February 23rd at [www.swmpc.org](http://www.swmpc.org) or by calling (269) 925-1137 x 21.

**Landscaping and Gardening Workshop, March 3rd**, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. at the New Troy Community Center, 13372 California Road, New Troy, MI. Speakers will present on a variety of topics including native plants and composting, and a tour of a rain garden is included. \$5 registration fee. Lunch is provided. View the full agenda and register on-line by February 23rd at [www.swmpc.org](http://www.swmpc.org) or by calling (269) 925-1137 x 21

**Berrien Conservation District Tree Seedling Sale, April 13th & 14th.** Berrien County Youth Fairgrounds, Berrien Springs, MI. Sale catalogs will be available at the end of February. Rain barrels, composters, tree and shrub seedlings will be available. Pre-orders will be due March 30. For more information contact the Berrien Conservation District at 269-471-9111 x 5.

*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.*