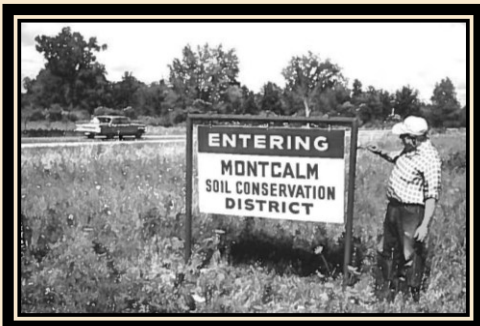


2023 Annual Report

Montcalm Conservation District



*Celebrating 75 years of serving
Montcalm County.*



Field Chopper Demonstration, 1951

Evening Itinerary:

The Montcalm Conservation District celebrates the conclusion of its 75th year in operation at the District's Annual Meeting at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 14, 2023 at the VFW Post 5065 – Lester J. Sitts (209 Washington St., Sheridan).

The evening includes:

- informational meeting
- election for one director position
- dinner catered by Edgar Farms
- auction with proceeds supporting the District's Scholarship Fund

The District is grateful for the support of the Montcalm County taxpayers, and the resulting millage funding that has enabled us to enhance and expand our programming. Thank you.

Table of Contents	Page
Native Plant & Tree Sales	pg. 3
Comden-Towle Model Forest	pg. 4
Forestry (FAP and QFP)	pg. 5
EGL 319 NPS Grant	pg. 6
Resource Recovery	pg. 7
MAEAP	pg. 8
On-Farm Produce Safety	pg. 9
Invasives	pg. 10
NRCS	pg. 11
FSA	pg. 12
2023 Events	pg. 13
Financials	pg. 14
Event Credits	pg. 15
Contacts	pg. 16

Our Mission: To Enhance Montcalm County's Natural Resources Through Conservation Education, Outreach, and Partnerships

The Montcalm Conservation District was organized in 1948 as a local unit of government to help solve soil and water problems with technical assistance provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).



Native Plant & Tree Sale

Every Spring and Fall, Montcalm Conservation District holds tree and native plant sales to encourage planting native in the region. We provide affordable plant materials and information on species selection, planting practices, and native care. We offer a variety of plants and trees at the sales; this year, we offered approximately 45 species of trees and 75 species of plants.

Our trees are sold in large bundles for the ease of conservation plantings like reforestation, windbreaks, wildlife habitat, erosion control, and CRP. Our native plants are sold as singles for small gardens and/or large landscaping projects. Native plants are specifically used because their adaptation to the local climate reaps many benefits for the environment.

Why Natives?

1. Require less water
2. No fertilizers needed
3. No pesticides needed
4. Reduce erosion
5. Reduce runoff
6. Provide natural habitat for local wildlife
7. Help maintain local biodiversity



	Sold in 2023	Sold Since 1948
Trees	25,647	12,816,243
Plants	1,001	1,708



Comden-Towle Model Forest

MAEAP
(FWH)
Verification

The 69 acre Model Forest was established as an outdoor laboratory in 1968 for the public to enjoy. The diverse property includes hardwood and softwood, native grass prairies, wetlands, and a pond. In the spring and summer, wildflowers blanket the forest floor where wild animals, birds, and insects inhabit. In autumn, vibrant colors of reds, oranges, and yellows steal the show, while on snowy winter days, the barren trees are dusted with bright white, shimmering snow and sparkling ice following the movement of the sun.

2 Miles of Trails

69 Acres of Land



Model Forest Dedication, 1968

Announcements
- Property Line Survey Conducted
- Boundaries Marked with New Posts and Signage



Boundary Signage, 2023

Model Forest, 2023

Rules

- Keep fires in the fire pit
- Put out campfire before you leave
- No off-road vehicles
- Stay on the trails
- No littering

Activities

- Snow Shoeing
- X-Country Skiing
- Summer Camps
- Family Reunions
- Lantern Walk
- Fire Pit
- Geocaching
- Day Hikes
- Field Trips
- Picnics

CLOSED TO ALL HUNTING

- Directions:** (Location is adjacent to the MSU Research Farm)
- From Greenville, Take M-91 north to Kendaville Rd, head east 4 mi and south 1 mi.
 - From Stanton, Take M-66 north 4.5 mi to Coral Rd, then west 5 mi

Forestry



FAP (Forestry Assistance Program)

The goal of the Forestry Assistance Program (FAP) is to help family forest owners achieve their goals for woodland ownership. The program provides outreach and technical assistance to help private landowners make good decisions about how to care for their land (MDARD).

District Foresters provide information and technical assistance to landowners including:

Programs

- FAP – QFP
- MAEAP – FWH
- American Tree Farm System
- NRCS – EQIP

Site Visits

- Forest Health & Wildlife Habitat Concerns
- Harvest Consultation

NOTE

District Forester position has been vacant since February, 2023. Position has yet to be filled, due to specific grant requirements not met by applicants.

QFP (Qualified Forest Program)

The purpose of the qualified forest Program (QFP) is to encourage landowners to actively manage their privately owned forests for commercial harvest, wildlife habitat enhancement, and improvement of other non-forest resources. In exchange for managing their forests in a sustainable fashion, the landowner will receive an exemption from the local school operating millage (MDARD).

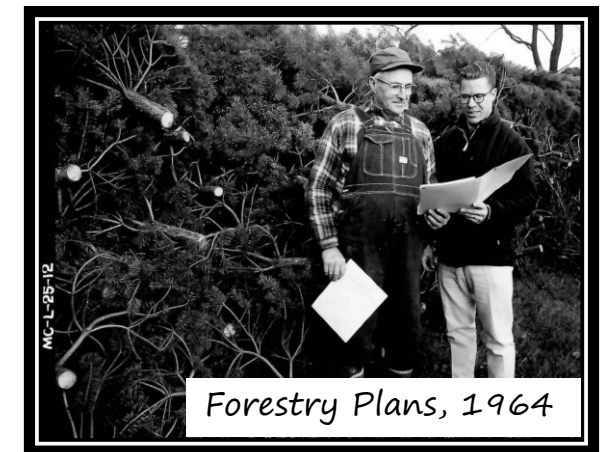
17
Site Visits

1,147
Acres Visited

Estimated Economic
Value of Activity:
~ \$85,826 (5 months)

Top Three Service Categories:

- 1 - Timber Sale
- 2 - Tree Planting
- 3 - General Recreation



EGLE 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Grant

Project, *Water Quality Improvements in the Flat River Watershed*, began on October 14, 2019 and ended on September 30, 2023. The Flat River is one of 16 DNR designated natural rivers in Michigan. Testing from 2016 showed the Flat River Watershed is impaired by pollutants: *E. coli*, sediment, nutrients, increased water temperatures and altered hydrology. Using recommendations outlined in the Flat River Watershed Management Plan, seven objectives were written into the grant to address the aforementioned pollutants and therefore improve water quality.

319 Funded Objectives:

- Conservation Easements in High Biodiversity Areas
- Natural River Ordinance Adoption
- Historical Septic Records
- Septic Education Mailers & Workshops
- Farmer-Led Workgroups (FLWGs) & Field Demonstrations (Discuss Ag Conservation)
- Cost Share Agricultural BMPs
- Cost Share Natural Shoreline Installation

Conservation Easement

50 Acres

Cost Shared Cover Crops (BMPs)

1,284 Acres

Estimated Pollutant Reduction

Sediment
67.38 tons

Phosphorous
120.47 lbs.

Nitrogen
847.64 lbs.

Natural Shoreline Installation

97 Linear Feet

FLWGs & Field Demonstrations

13 FLWGs & 3 Field Demos

Natural River Ordinance Updates

5 Township Ordinances

Historical Septic Records

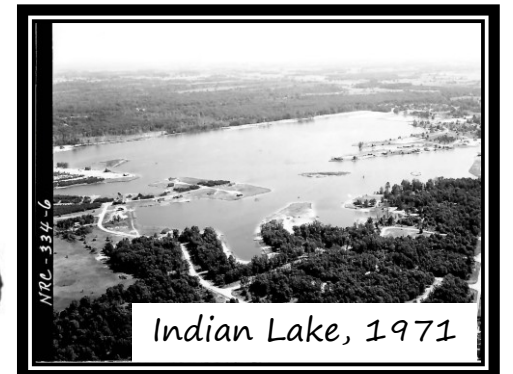
3,695 Sites Mapped

Septic Education

9,000 Mailers & 8 Workshops



Flat River, 2023
(W McBride Rd.)



Indian Lake, 1971

Resource Recovery

The Montcalm Conservation District along with the Montcalm Solid Waste Committee work together to enhance recycling education and outreach by promoting the goals of our county Management Plan. With the help of the Solid Waste Committee and Rural Electronics and Scrap Tire Grants from the Michigan Department of Environment Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), we are able to offer our recycling services [FREE OF CHARGE](#).

The Montcalm Conservation District drop-off recycling program has made some improvements to the sites, including the introduction of compactors at the Stanton, Lakeview and Edmore sites, progress to install compactors at the Carson City and Crystal locations, and the opening of a sixth recycling site in Howard City. We are proud to be the first county in the State of Michigan to offer a recycling program that provides open recycling compactors 24/7 for our residents.

Recycling properly saves our taxpayers money by reducing the cost of sending materials to landfills, supporting jobs, and improving environmental health while creating stronger, healthier communities.

Recycling Services:

Drop Off Recycling Sites

By-Appointment Permanent
Electronic Recycling

Spring & Fall Tire and Electronics
Recycling Events (T & E)

Spring & Fall Household Hazardous
Waste Collection Events (HHW)



Lakeview

Village of Lakeview Complex
208 S. Lincoln Avenue, 48850

Stanton

Mid-Michigan District Health
Department
615 N. State Street, 48888

Edmore

Department of Public Works
110 Quicksilver Lane, 48829

Crystal

Crystal Township & Community
Center
217 W. Park Street, 48818

Carson City

Department of Public Works
818 N. Williams Street, 48811

Howard City

City Complex
220 White Street,
49329



In 2023...

Fall HHW - 63 Vehicles

Spring HHW - 205 Vehicles

Fall T & E - 128 Vehicles

Spring T & E - 303 Vehicles

Electronics Appts - 122 Vehicles

MAEAP (Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program)

MAEAP is a voluntary and confidential program that recognizes landowners for their superior environmental stewardship. MAEAP recognizes private landowners that reduce erosion and runoff into public waters like ponds, streams and rivers.

In the shared region of Mecosta and Montcalm County, Fiscal Year 22-23, the MAEAP Technician Completed :

17 Risk Assessments
16 Re-Assessments
3 New Verifications
11 Re-Verifications
47 Risk Reduction Practices

4,474 Acres of Farmland
428 Acres of Forestland

Four Systems of Recognition

Farmstead – addresses environmental risks on the entire farmstead, focusing on protecting surface and groundwater.

Cropping – addresses field-based activities such as water use, soil conservation and nutrient management, applies to field crops, vegetables, fruit orchards, greenhouse crops and ornamental trees.

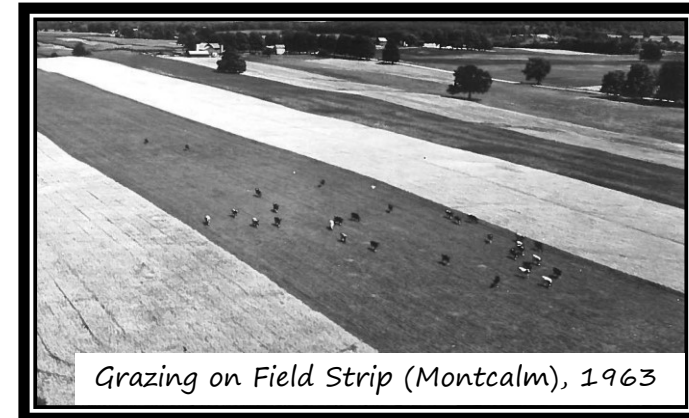
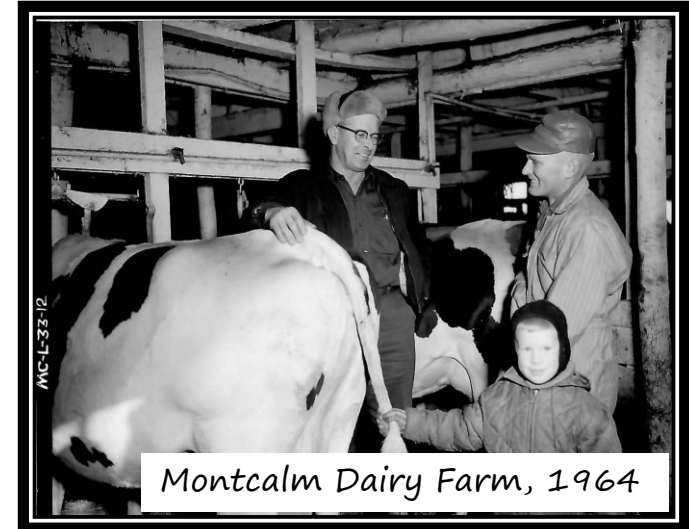
Livestock – addresses animal production activities including manure management practices, water quality protection and erosion control. Applies to all livestock species.

MAEAP Four Step Program:

1. Attend education workshop
2. Invite MAEAP technician to tour your farm
3. Implement practices recommended by the technician
4. Earn recognition for your work



Forest, Wetland & Habitat – addresses practices that promote sustainability as well as restore natural habitat, improve forest health and protect the quality of air, water and soil.



If you are interested in MAEAP please call the office at 989-831-4212 x5.



On-Farm Produce Safety

Free

Voluntary

Non-regulatory

Confidential

Produce Safety Technicians offer resources to assess your current practices and improve your fresh produce safety where necessary.

Produce Safety Risk Assessment (PSRA) – a program to educate producers about food safety and recognize those who implement strong produce safety practices. Producers who successfully complete the PSRA and on-site farm review are awarded certificates that can be advertised to their consumers.

On-Farm Readiness Review (OFRR) – a program where technicians walk through a producer’s operation and discuss how to better meet the standards of regulatory inspections that may be required by law.

Any and all produce growers are eligible to receive assistance, which can take many forms such as action plans, food safety plans, water testing, training protocols, record keeping, wash pack consultations and microbial risk mitigation.

For More Information,

Contact Morgan at

616-223-0027

morgan.anderson@macd.org

2023 Accomplishments

80 Farm Visits

11 Certifications

50 Training Events

106 Networking Events



Produce Safety Technician, 2023

Morgan Anderson (Produce Safety Technician)

Morgan Anderson is the new produce safety technician located at the Ottawa Conservation District; she services Montcalm County along with 7 other counties. Morgan has a degree in Environmental Studies with a minor in public policy. She has worked at the University of Michigan Campus Farm, Trout Unlimited and the University Sustainable Food Program. Growing up on a family farm, she has always been passionate about agriculture and local food systems. Morgan looks forward to continuing her pursuit of these passions and building relationships with Montcalm County growers. In her free time, Morgan enjoys hiking, photography, crafting and spending time with loved ones.



Networking Event, 2023

Invasives

An invasive species is a non-native species whose introduction causes harm to the economy, environment or human health.

Invasives compete with native species for resources and typically win out due to their rapid reproduction, quick spreading and/or lack of natural predators. The winning invasives threaten the survival of native species and affect the stability of ecosystems.

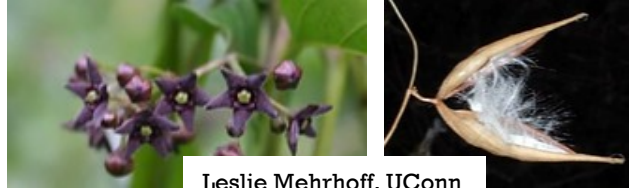
We contract with the Kent Conservation District Strike Team to provide invasive species treatment in this county.

We can provide funding/cost-share for the treatment of a variety of species.

In 2023, the species included Japanese knotweed, Japanese stiltgrass, Chinese yam and black swallow-wort.

Black Swallow-wort

Star-shaped, purple flowers grow in clusters on a vine measuring up to 7 ft long. Seed pods are covered in fine hair and leaves are oval with a pointed tip.



Leslie Mehrhoff, UConn

Japanese Knotweed

Hollow stalks resembling bamboo, white flowers like upward spikes, prefers sunny, moist conditions. Height averages around 3-10ft tall.



Suzan Campbell, MNFI

Chinese Yam

Slender vines with air tubers resembling small potatoes and heart-shaped leaves slightly indented on the sides.



Chris & Troy Evans, IWAP & GSMNP

Japanese Stiltgrass

Low-growing grass with alternate leaves and a shiny mid-rib slightly off center.



Leslie Mehrhoff, UConn

Invasive Species Prevention

- Stay on designated trails while hiking.
- Clean your boots, gear, pets and vehicles after a hike or camping.
- Wash your canoe, kayak or boat after taking it out on the water.
- Don't move firewood.
- Report invasives species.
- Plant native flowers, grasses, trees and vegetation.

98 Total Sites Treated

35 New Sites Treated

63 Sites Re-treated

46.88 Total Acres Treated

9 Sites Completely Eradicated

MISIN

Midwest Invasive Species Information Network is a regional effort to develop early detection and effective response resources on invasive species for both experts and citizens alike.



WMCN is a partnership of governmental organizations, environmental groups, non-profits and private citizens united to address invasive species in West Michigan. WMCN covers seven counties and provides outreach, education and management on invasive species

What to Do If You Find an Invasive Species

- **Identify Species** (take photo if possible)
- **Estimate Infestation Size**
- **Record Location** (coordinates or address)
- **Collect Property Owner's Info** (if possible)
- **Report to...**

MCD - faith.hayes@macd.org / 989-831-4212 x112

WMCN - wmconservation.net/request-for-treatment/

MISIN - www.misin.msu.edu/report/misin/?project=misin

NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service)

NRCS was born out of the Dust Bowl of the 1930's. Today through voluntary conservation programs, NRCS helps producers, conservation districts, and other partners protect and conserve natural resource concerns of different landscapes. While the faces in the Stanton NRCS office have changed, the staff continue the mission of delivering conservation solutions to treat the resource concerns in Montcalm County.

The NRCS staff is eager to work with you! Whether you've been in the office lately or not, now is a great time to introduce yourself and discuss projects you have in mind for the next 1-5 years. With funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), NRCS can provide additional assistance through conservation programs. Funding is provided through a competitive process and will include an opportunity to address unmet demand from producers who have previously sought funding.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): A voluntary, conservation program where NRCS offers financial and technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to plan and implement conservation practices on working land.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): A voluntary, five-year program that provides agricultural and forest producers with financial and technical assistance to increase their baseline conservation level by maintaining current and adopting new conservation practices.



Montcalm Co. NRCS Staff, 2023

Colby Owens
(Soil Conservation Technician)

Colby Owens is Montcalm County's new Soil Conservation Technician as of March, 2023. Colby attended Ball State University and studied Natural Resource Management. In his free time, Colby enjoys camping, hiking, foraging and other outdoor activities. Colby's favorite part of his job is providing technical assistance to those interested in pursuing conservation practices.

NRCS Vision
"A world of clean and abundant water, healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and thriving agricultural communities through voluntary conservation."

Montcalm NRCS Office:
989-831-4212 x170
Tamara Buitenwerf: x104
Colby Owens: x107

- 2023 Accomplishments**
- 22 Active CSP Contracts
 - 10 Active EQIP Contracts
 - 41 Applications for EQIP & CSP
 - 6 CRP Plans Created
 - 153 Requests for HEL & Wetland Determinations



FFA Tour Presentation, 1965



Seedling Examination, 1965

Tamara Buitenwerf
(District Conservationist)

Tamara Buitenwerf is Montcalm County's new District Conservationist. Tamara comes to us from the corresponding position in Ionia County. Tamara has 23 years experience working for NRCS and is passionate about helping landowners improve their land conservation. Tamara attended California University at Fresno and studied Agriculture Education and Plant Science. In her free time, Tamara enjoys hunting and spending time with her family. Tamara is looking forward to working with the landowners of Montcalm County.

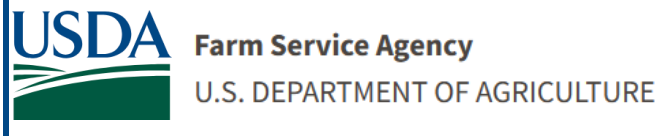


Farm Service Agency (FSA)

The Farm Service Agency is currently offering:

- Many different types of loans in the Farm Loan Department
- Emergency Relief Program (ERP) 2022 for producers who suffered a loss in 2022
- Marketing Assistance Loans for 2023 harvested crops
- Farm Storage Facility Loans

The 2018 Farm Bill has been extended for one year. The Farm Service Agency is waiting for their official program notices before they can start any program signups for fiscal year 2024. If you are wondering if it is time to sign up for a program or if a program is available in the Farm Bill extension, please call the Montcalm County FSA office.



Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

A voluntary, land conservation program where farmers agree to change environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production to natural landscape. Farmers must plant approved grasses and trees as cover to control soil erosion, improve water quality and establish wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides the farmer with rental payments and related cost-share assistance.

Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC)

A program that offers financial protection to dairy producers when the all-milk price and the margin price fall below an amount designated by the producer.

FSA Staff

County Executive Director
Heather Hadder
Program Technicians
Carolyn Waite
Carrie Albert
Sydney Stauffer

Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC)

Programs provide financial protections to farmers when substantial drops in crop prices and revenues occur.

Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)

A program that provides cost-share assistance to producers obtaining/renewing their certification under the National Organic Program.

Montcalm County FSA Office: 989-831-4212 x160

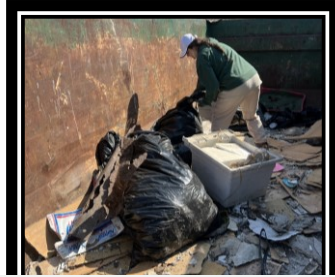


2023 Events

Acting on our mission, the Montcalm Conservation District holds a variety of workshops/educational outreach events where we strive to expand our involvement in the community by disseminating information about a range of conservation practices and programs.



**Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop
Anderson & Girls Orchard
(March 24, 2023)**



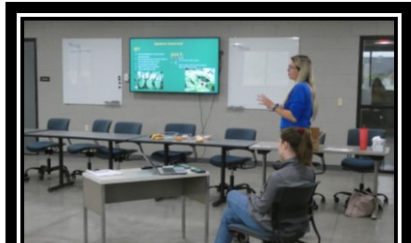
**State Land Clean Up
(April 15, 2023)**



**Project Red - Farm Bureau
(May 18, 2023)**



**Greenville Garden Club Presentation
(May 24, 2023)**



**Invasives Training with
Montcalm Road Commission
(June 29, 2023)**



**Howard City Compactor Ribbon Cutting
(July 17, 2023)**



**Montcalm County Field Day
MSU Ext. Research Farm
(August 3, 2023)**



**Cowden Lake Mobile Boat Wash
& Lake Assoc. Presentation
(August 12, 2023)**



**Community Services Fair
Tamarack District Library
(August 23, 2023)**



**Tri-County HS - MCC Environmental
Science Class Agriculture Field Trip
(October 12, 2023)**



**Tri-County HS & MCC Environmental
Science Classes Watershed Field Trip
(October 18-19, 2023)**

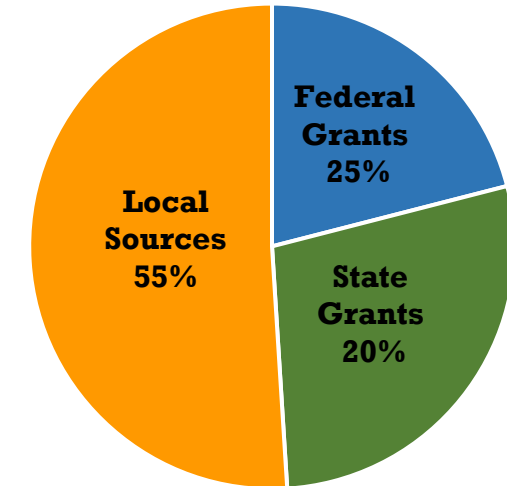


**Conservation Tour
(September 14, 2023)**

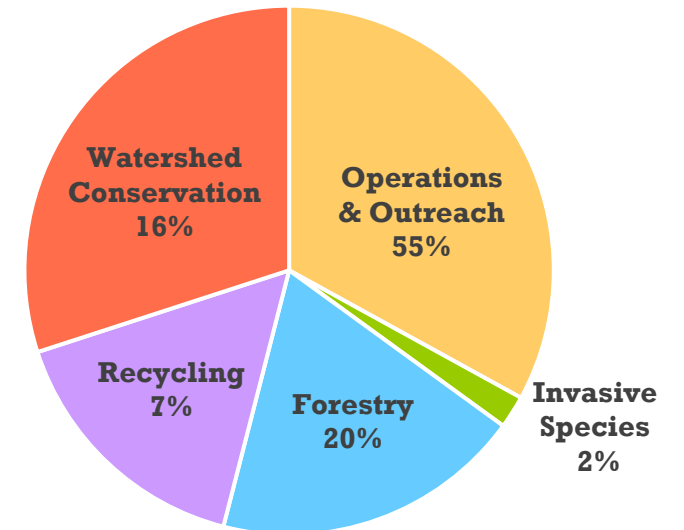
Financials

Conservation Districts rely heavily on federal, state and other grants to provide funding for project and program implementation, but these grants often have very limited budgets for planning, administration and day-to-day operations. Most grants require local matching funds, which can make it even more difficult to sustain work without some base funding. The operational grant funding from the state along with the revenue generated by the shared millage provide funding to support Montcalm Conservation District's ability to continue to provide assistance to landowners, assess local natural resource conservation needs, design projects and programs to address those needs, and to apply for grants to carry out those projects and programs. The renewal of the shared millage along with increasing property values generates a reliable revenue stream allowing for operations planning. Resident support of the millage and of our tree and native plant sales are the foundation of our operations. These primary funding sources are integral to MCD basic operations and are enabling us to revitalize and expand our programming for the benefit of Montcalm County residents.

Fiscal Year 2023 Revenue



Fiscal Year 2023 Expenses



Thank you, Donors.

Local Business Donors

Anderson & Girls Orchards

Big L Lumber

Bush Pro Hardware

Harvey's'

Lakeview Elevator LLC

Mark's Wood n' Stuff

NAPA

Oh Beeswax

Randall's Old Mill

Rogers Natural Foods

Stanton Hardware Corp.

True Value



Individual Donors

Carrie Albert

Faith Hayes

Jack Knorek

Bruce Noll

Kelli Rey-Fry

Claudette Sabin

Neva Springsteen

Amber Snow

Steve Wyckoff

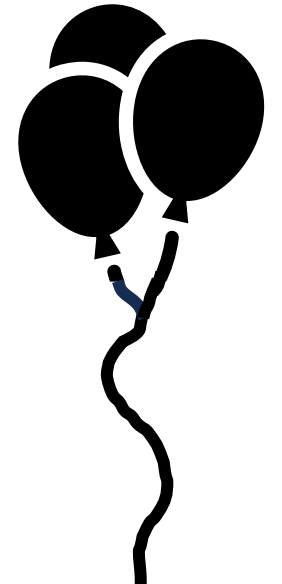


Special thanks to the additional groups that were integral in making this year's annual meeting a success.

VFW Post 5065 Lester J. Sitts

Edgar Farms Catering

Amanda Sturm's Montcalm Area Career Center
Agriscience Class



1



First District Board 1948

Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to helping you meet your conservation goals.

13



District Board 1961

50



District Board 1998

District Board

Bruce Noll	Chairman
Chris Mark	Vice Chair
Mark Sabin	Treasurer
Jed Welder	Director
Steve Wyckoff	Director
Sue Aagaard	Associate Director
John Johansen	Associate Director

75



District Board, 2023

District Staff

Amber Snow	District Manager	989-831-4212 x 105
Staff	Forester	989-831-4212 x 111
Faith Hayes	Conservation Program Technician	989-831-4212 x 112
Alyssa Silveus	Resource Recovery Technician	989-831-4212 x 108



Montcalm Conservation District
77 South State St. Stanton, MI 48888
(989) 831-4212 x 5
www.montcalmcd.org