



Helping People Help the Land Conservation Notes

USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service - Michigan

March/April 2018

Pollinator Week Brings Attention to Bees & Butterflies

The news of declining pollinator numbers led the United States Senate to designate a National Pollinators Week in 2007. Since that time conservation organizations have remained focused on protecting pollinators and educating the public about their importance.

NRCS launched an initiative to create habitat for honeybees and this past year added another initiative to protect monarch butterflies. Both of these initiatives provided technical and financial assistance to landowners to create or improve pollinator habitat.

Through the Honey Bee Initiative alone, Michigan landowners have contracted to improve or create pollinator habitat on nearly 3,000 acres of land since 2014. Additional pollinator habitat assistance through EQIP and the Conservation Reserve Program have created many additional acres of habitat.

Perhaps equally as important as creating pollinator habitat is educating the public about the plight of pollinators and their importance. NRCS has joined other organizations to educate the public about the importance of pollinators through partnerships like the Monarch Joint Venture and the Pollinator Partnership. These partnerships pool the resources of conservation organizations to disseminate the message about protecting pollinators.

Closer to home, Governor Rick Snyder signed a proclamation declaring the week of June 18 to 24,



MSU will host its annual Bee-Palooza event on June 24, to recognize Pollinator Week (above). Governor Rick Snyder signed a proclamation designating June 18 to 24, as Michigan Pollinator Week (right).

-photo courtesy of MSU Dept. of Entomology



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United States Department of Agriculture

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State Conservationist's Message

Each April, NRCS takes the opportunity of National Volunteer Week to recognize and celebrate our Earth Team volunteers. Earth Team was created by NRCS in 1985 to provide an opportunity for volunteers to assist the agency's mission and to support conservation in their local communities.

During the past year, Earth Team volunteers have served in all four of NRCS -Michigan's administrative areas from Stephenson in the Upper Peninsula to Flint and Grand Rapids. Michigan's volunteers include current employees who donate their time on weekends to environmental education, agency retirees who continue to support the work of NRCS and students who utilize the program to learn about potential careers in conservation.

People can become Earth Team volunteers as individuals or as groups. Earth Team volunteer groups can assist with field days, planting pollinator habitat or other short-term projects where many hands can be valuable. Volunteers not only contribute to the conservation mission of NRCS but also communicate that mission to their communities.

A detail in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 that funded the Federal government this fiscal year will make life a little easier for producers participating in USDA conservation programs. Farmers and forestowners participating in NRCS programs like EQIP and CSP will no longer need a Dun and Bradstreet Universal Number System (DUNS) number or

to register in the System for Award Management (SAM). Congressional leaders and Agriculture Secretary Perdue agreed that the system was never intended for producers and language eliminating the requirement were included in the funding bill. Not only were producers required to register, but registrations had to be periodically renewed to maintain program eligibility.



State Conservationist
Garry Lee



This requirement now only applies to vendors, or partners such as entities participating in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program or the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. The requirement does not apply to producers receiving conservation assistance through RCPP or who enter into easement agreements with farmland conservation entities receiving ACEP funding.

The first fiscal year 2018 selection of applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program in Michigan was a success. Michigan received enough applications to utilize all of its allocated general EQIP funds for the year. Additional selections will be held this year for Regional Conservation Partnership Program EQIP funds which are allocated on a multi-year basis. Producers who were not selected this year or did not submit an application are encouraged to apply or update their applications.

Earth Team Volunteers Improve Today for Tomorrow

During April, NRCS recognized the contribution of Earth Team volunteer efforts, throughout the nation, during National Volunteer Week. Our theme, “Volunteers Improve Today for Tomorrow,” uses the week of April 15-21, 2018, to show gratitude to Earth Team volunteers for their superb service to conservation.

The Earth Team is the agency’s volunteer workforce. This past fiscal year, more than 34,309 people donated 325,601 hours of service to NRCS. In Michigan, volunteers served in all four NRCS administrative areas. From Stephenson to Bear Lake, Flint and Grand Rapids volunteers worked alongside NRCS to provide resources to farmers and landowners to aid them with conservation.

Earth Team is a program that partners volunteers with NRCS employees. It was created in 1985 and offers many opportunities to individuals 14 and older who are interested in volunteering to improve the nation’s natural resources. Earth Team volunteers help NRCS conservationists provide private landowners and others with a range of services, from conservation technical assistance to teaching and generating awareness about conservation through community projects.

Earth Team volunteers are invaluable as they expand



Madison Pullen (above left) and Carolyn Nauta (above right), learned about conservation careers while assisting the Area 3 engineering staff as Earth Team Volunteers.

NRCS’ efforts to help protect and conserve the nation’s natural resources.

Volunteers dedicate their time and talents to various conservation activities, from helping farmers prevent soil erosion, protecting water resources and watersheds against flood damage, to improving the condition of grazing land, and enhancing wildlife habitat.

Learn more about the Earth Team Volunteer Program online at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/earthteam.

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Pollinator Week Brings Attention to Bees & Butterflies

as Michigan Pollinator Week in coordination with National Pollinator Week. Organizations throughout the state will host events to educate the public about the importance of pollinators and their protection.

Since 2012, the Michigan State University Department of Entomology has hosted Bee-Palooza at the MSU Horticulture Gardens in East Lansing. This year’s event is from 1 to 4 p.m. on June 24. About 400 to 500 people have been attending Bee-Palooza according to the event’s coordinator Julianna Wilson.

Bee-Palooza includes displays and activities covering a wide variety of pollinator topics like pollinator-friendly gardening and the many native species of Michigan bees. This year’s event will feature ground-nesting bees and the lifecycle of monarch butterflies. A popular long-running exhibit allows

attendees to “pet a bee” at a tent of non-stinging male bumble bees. Most of Michigan’s native bees are not aggressive and have relatively weak stings, said Wilson.

Several Pollinator Week events are already scheduled but more events are sure to be announced in the coming weeks.

Pollinator Week Events

Pollinator Power - June 23, 1 to 2:30 p.m., Chippewa Nature Center - Midland

Pollinator Hoopla - June 23, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Macomb Community College University Center- Clinton Township

MSU Bee-Palooza, June 24, 1 to 4 p.m., MSU Horticulture Gardens - East Lansing

Bad Axe Field Office Honored by TNC

by The Nature Conservancy
The Bad Axe Field Office NRCS and Conservation District staff were awarded the TNC's Practioner Award.



The conservation staff at the Bad Axe field office were honored by The Nature Conservancy at its Saginaw Bay Agricultural Conservation Awards Dinner. Above from l-r are Ryan Kuhl, Janice Schramski, Jeanette Renn, Greg Renn, Charlie Errer, Michael Daskam, Dennis Weidman and Brett Riser.

In 2016, the Huron County Field Office led the way for Saginaw Bay RCPP, delivering more contracts and environmental results than any other county in the watershed, with 19 projects, including 23 Conservation Activities Plans; 6,627 acres of practices; and 907 tons of sediment savings.

In the same year, the team enrolled over 1,500 acres of new no-till acres and 138 acres of drainage water management under The Nature Conservancy's Water Replenishment program. These efforts have resulted in 44.8 million gallons of water replenished to the Pigeon-Pinnebog Watershed annually.

This highly effective team of conservation professionals consists of eight members from both the USDA-NRCS and Huron County Conservation

District. All members pitch in equally to deliver programs to their constituents as a cohesive service center. The team delivers programs through federal sources (via Farm Bill and EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative programs), state sources (such as the Michigan Agricultural Environmental

Assurance Program and local sources (via grants from foundations and corporations). This three-legged stool approach to conservation— and the success that has resulted—exemplifies the ideal conservation district team model.

The Huron County Field Office is advancing Saginaw Bay Watershed conservation programs by hosting field days, workshops and training events. While environmental results for 2017 are still being verified, data shows Huron County again led with more conservation projects enrolled than any other county in the watershed.

Michigan Envirothon State Competition Kicks off May 21

High school teams from across Michigan will meet in Lake Ann from May 21 to 23 for the Michigan Envirothon State Competition.

The annual competition, which includes regional events in advance of the state competition, is sponsored by the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts. The outdoors, hands-on events allows high schools students to compete against other teams on their environmental knowledge and skills. The competitions focus on agriculture, aquatic ecology, energy, forestry, soils/geology, wildlife and for 2018, rangeland management.

Participants receive training and instruction from conservation professionals in advance of the events. Teams also complete a community project to educate and draw attention to a local environmental issue. This year's winning team has the opportunity to

represent Michigan in the NCF-Envirothon at Idaho State University in Pocatello.



One of the teams competing at the 2018 Michigan Envirothon State Competition will be the Van Buren Voyagers team who finished first in the Region 4 competition.

2018 Omnibus Bill Nixes DUNS and SAM Requirements

Natural Resources Conservation Service financial assistance program participants will no longer need a Dun and Bradstreet Universal Number System (DUNS) number, or to register in the System for Award Management (SAM). The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, signed by President Donald Trump on March 23, eliminated these requirements.

According to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, DUNS and SAM were designed for billion-dollar government contractors, not everyday farmers trying to support their families. These changes help streamline the customer experience of farmers, which is a top priority at USDA, he said.

The exemption does not apply to any current or future agreements or federal contracts with eligible entities, project sponsors, vendors, partners, or other non-exempt landowners or producers.

DUNS/SAM registration is still required for:

- Partnership agreements entered through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).



- All agreements with eligible entities under the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)
- Agreements under the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) component of ACEP.
- Partnership agreements under the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) component of ACEP-Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE).

- Watershed operations agreements with project sponsors.
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) agreements with project sponsors, including Recovery and Floodplain Easements.

- All cooperative, contribution, interagency, or partnership agreements of Federal contracts used by NRCS to procure goods or services.

NRCS advises participants in its programs to ignore any emails, phone calls or other communications from third-party vendors offering assistance for registering in SAMS or applying for a DUNS number.

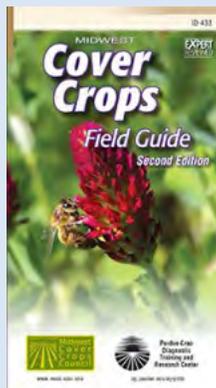
Cover Crops Field Guide Mobile App Available

by Purdue University Extension

The Midwest Cover Crops Council has reformatted its popular field guide to create the Midwest Cover Crops Field Scout mobile app for cellphones and tablets. The app allows farmers, crop advisers and conservation professionals to access vital cover crop information from mobile devices.

“The app improves upon the printed pocket guide by providing useful links to more in-depth articles on many topics covered in the printed guide,” said Anna Morrow, MCCC program manager. “The digital version of the guide also provides additional photos beyond what’s found in the printed guide.”

Once downloaded, the content of the app will be available at any time on a mobile device. Internet connection will not be required to view cover crop information in the field.



The app is available for both iOS and Android devices with an annual subscription for \$2.99.

The subscription fee allows the MCCC to periodically update the app throughout the year with the latest available content.

Users will receive a renewal reminder when their subscription is nearing its end. Bulk purchase will be available for companies and field day organizers, allowing groups to offer free downloads at special events.

The app can be found by searching “cover crop” in either the App Store or Google Play, and direct links are available on the MCCC website at <http://mccc.msu.edu/>.

The printed version of the field guide will continue to be available through the Purdue Extension Education Store.

The development of this app was made possible by the Walton Family Foundation.

Ten Forest Myths

by Bill Cook, Michigan State University Extension

Working every year with hundreds of school kids and various public groups, several misconceptions, under-lying assumptions, or myths seem to bubble up to the surface on a regular basis. How many of the following ten have you harbored?

1. Trees provide the air we breathe.

Most of the Earth's fresh oxygen is produced from the oceans, which makes sense when you understand that three-quarters of the Earth's surface is covered with water. For terrestrial systems, non-forest biomes are the most common. So, oxygen from trees? Meh. Okay, they produce some, but it is not a particularly high value attributable to trees or forests.

2. We should plant two trees for every one we harvest.

In the Lake States, planting is typically unnecessary. Our forest management systems are tailored to the various forest types to create environmental conditions that encourage natural regeneration. This management is quite successful. So, why plant a few trees when nature will successfully produce billions? This said, there are circumstances where tree planting is needed and useful.

3. A tree grows one ring per year.

If a tree grew only one ring, how could you tell where last year's ring ended and the next year's ring began? In fact, our northern temperate trees grow two annual rings each year. The wider, light-colored ring grows in the springtime, followed by the narrower, dark colored ring in the summertime. Then, the tree stops growing wood for about six months.

4. Forests are disappearing.

This is not true in Michigan or across the Lake States, although it is true in some regions around the world. As of 2017, Michigan has more acres of forestland than any time since the 1930s, when statistical forest inventories began. Now, if you live in an urban area and see sprawl gobbling up the countryside, it might be easy to get this impression. However, statewide,

we now have a bit over 20 million acres of forest, and that covers a little over half the state.

5. Clearcutting is deforestation.

Deforestation, by definition, is a land use change from forest to something else. The overwhelming amount of deforestation is for agriculture, and then, secondly, for building human infrastructure. Clearcutting is a forest regeneration practice designed to stimulate the reproduction of sun-loving

tree species, such as the aspens, red pine, jack pine and others. Natural clearcutting happens through wildfire, windstorms, insect and disease outbreaks and similar events. While clearcutting is not quite exactly the same thing, it's far more benign than natural occurrences.

6. Planting a tree will save the planet.

This is a popular promotional campaign and has some value in raising awareness, but in ecological terms it is nonsense. Even if every Michigander planted a thousand trees every year, that amount would not come close to annual natural regeneration. However, planting trees does have strategic value in filling-in where nature missed a beat, to change forest type compositions, or to achieve a visual quality objective at a residence or in a city. So, planting trees is a great thing, it is just not going to save the planet.

7. Mother nature knows best.

Nature knows nothing. It is not sentient. Benign neglect is not a fruitful strategy. The predictable paths of natural succession lead to places most people are not going to be happy with. First, the forest legacy following the historic logging era left forests in an unnatural condition, which is the forest that we see today. Second, ecological forest processes alone are unlikely to meet all the demands that society places upon forests. Third, forest health challenges and exotic species place additional pressures on forests. The solution to these problems is active forest management. We don't manage forests for the forests' sake. We manage forests for people, by working with natural processes.

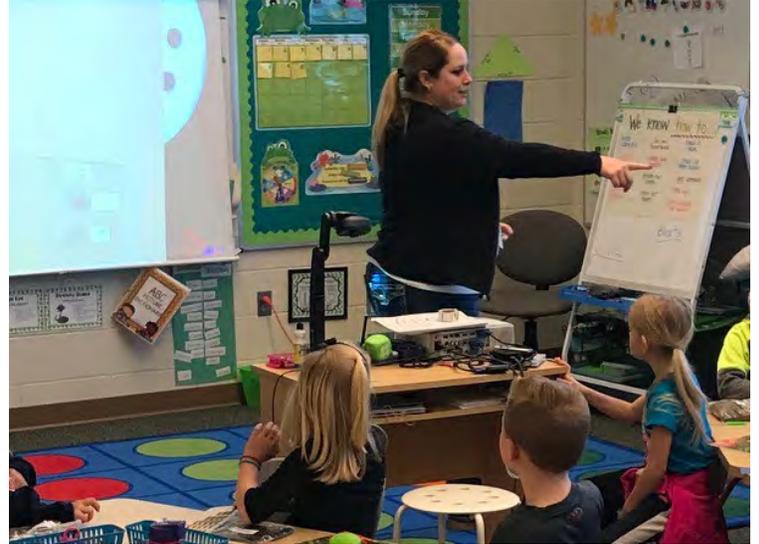
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Mom Brings a Soil Scientist to School



Resource Conservationist Kristian Williams (above) visited her children's kindergarten classroom at Hudsonville Public Schools along with Area 3 Resource Soil Scientist Erin Segar (above right). Kristian and Erin talked to the students about



the importance of soils and helped the students examine soils for texture and color.

-submitted photos

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Ten Forest Myths

8. Timber harvest destroys wildlife habitat.

Harvest, natural disturbance or forest succession creates habitat changes. These changes benefit some species and do not benefit others. Therefore, any particular timber harvest will have wildlife winners and losers. The same is true without the harvest. More likely, critics of timber harvest react to the change in visual quality, which is an especially poor measure of ecological integrity.

9. Government owns most of the forest.

Nearly two-thirds of the Michigan forest is privately owned. Of that, families own nearly three-quarters. The State of Michigan owns about 21 percent and the federal government owns about 17 percent. Ownership has a huge impact on how a forest is managed. However, regardless of ownership, all forests provide benefits to everyone.

10. Forest industry is a destructive, extractive industry.

It is counter-intuitive to many, but the forest industry provides the financial incentive for forest management. No markets leads to no management. With an unmanaged forest, there is a road of troubles. Additionally, there is no greener industry. Thousands of daily products, made from the most

environmentally friendly raw material at our disposal, come from forests. Forest products also include clean water and a diversity of wildlife habitat. In contrast to the myth, the forest industry supports a wide range of goods and services, including a healthier environment. Wood use is not a choice, it is essential to our survival. Every U.S. resident uses an average of three to four pounds of wood every day.

Michigan is a big state. It can be misleading to assume that what may be seen in a particular area or along highway corridors is what occurs across the state. Our forests currently produce an amazing array of benefits and unmet opportunities. The potential for increases in quality and quantity of these benefits is huge.

Our popular culture seems to perpetuate many incorrect assumptions and perceptions about forests and how humans depend upon forests. Do not believe everything you read. Look it up and learn, it can end up being pretty fun stuff!

This article was published by Michigan State University Extension. For more information, visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu>.

Upcoming Events - Upcoming Events - Upcoming Events - Upcoming Events

May

- 8 Garlic Mustard Pull & Pizza Night, 4:30 to 6 p.m., Ingham Conservation District - Mason, for more information go to inghamconservation.com
- 9 Conservation Programs for Landowners, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., Bay De Noc Community College - Escanaba, for more information contact the Delta Conservation District at 906/553-7700 or email lorimathews@deltacd.org
- 11 Garlic Mustard Workbee - Benzie County, 9 a.m. to noon, meet at First Congregational Church - Frankfort, *
- 12 Garlic Mustard Workbee - Grand Traverse County, 9 a.m. to noon, meet at Boardman River Nature Center - Traverse City, *
- 14-15 Safe Use of Animal-Based Soil Amendments: FSMA Requirements and Best Practices, Cherry Capital Foods - Traverse City, go to msue.anr.events/ for more information
- 16 Conservation Programs for Landowners, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., Bay De Noc Community College - Escanaba, for more information contact the Delta Conservation District at 906/553-7700 or email lorimathews@deltacd.org
- 17 Forest Pests & Diseases, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., Hart Community Center - Hart, for more information call 231/861-5600 or email michael.paling@macd.org
- 17-18 Safe Use of Animal-Based Soil Amendments: FSMA Requirements and Best Practices, UP Research & Extension Center - Chatham, go to msue.anr.events/ for more information
- 18 Garlic Mustard Workbee - Leelanau County, 9 a.m. to noon, meet at Leland Public Library - Leland, *
- 19 Mushroom Log Workshop, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Clare County Fairgrounds - Harrison, \$25 pre-registration required, for more information or to register call 989/539-6401 or email nia.becker@macd.org
- 31 Baby's Breath Workbee, 10 a.m. to noon, meet at Elberta Beach - Elberta, *

June

- 7 Partner & Volunteer Invasive Species ID & Mapping Training, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Boardman River Nature Center - Traverse City, *
- 7 Baby's Breath Workbee, 10 a.m. to noon, meet at Elberta Beach - Elberta, *
- 9 Knotweed Workshop - Manistee County, 9 a.m. to noon, meeting place TBD, *
- 9 Education on the Farm, 9:30 a.m., Peaceful Acres & Wallis Family Farm - Rudyard, for more information call 906/632-9611 ext. 111 or go to www.cfmcd.org
- 10 Livestock on the Small Farm, 1 to 5 p.m., MSU North Farm - Chatham, for more information go to www.msunorthfarm.org/
- 13 Knotweed Workshop, 5 to 8 p.m., Elmwood Township Hall - Traverse City, *
- 15 Japanese Barberry Trade-up Day, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Manistee Conservation District - Bear Lake, *
- 16 Field Day on the Farm, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Waishkay Bay Farm - Brimley, for more information call 906/248-1097
- 16 Japanese Barberry Trade-up Day, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Boardman River Nature Center - Traverse City, *
- 16 Baby's Breath Workbee, 10 a.m. to noon, Elberta Beach - Elberta, *
- 22 Farmer Field Day; Soil Stewardship & Farm Longevity, 8:45 a.m. to 4 p.m., Maple Bay Farm - Williamsburg, to register call the Grand Traverse Conservation District at 231/941-0960 ext. 22 or email lfreed@gtcd.org
- 24 MSU Bee-Palooza, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., MSU Horticulture Gardens - East Lansing, for more information go to www.beepalooza.org
- 28 Agriculture Innovation Day: Focus on Fruit and Vegetable Technologies, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., MSU Southwest Research & Extension Center - Benton Harbor, for more information go to www.cant.msu.edu

* For more information contact the NW Michigan Invasive Species Network at 231/941-0960 or email kgrzesiak@gtcd.org

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