OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2021 Annual Report

OTTAWA
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT

WWW.OTTAWACD.ORG

WHO WE ARE

The Ottawa Conservation District was founded in 1938 by several landowners concerned with soil degradation that resulted from years of negligent land management. Upon formation, the District set forth goals to remediate soil erosion. Today, the Ottawa Conservation District continues to meet foundational agriculture goals while also providing services related to other forms of natural resource management and conservation in Ottawa County.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of Conservation,
How do I express how honored I am to be part of this team? I am proud to brag about our knowledgeable and dedicated staff, the extensive fieldwork that was completed, our successful events, and our strong and loyal partners.
Thank you for making 2021 yet another remarkable year in conservation. This year has marked 83 years of service in Ottawa County.

As you will read in our annual report, the Ottawa Conservation District has continued to strive towards protecting and enhancing our local natural resources. The district's ag and watershed programs have worked with producers on sustainable practices by offering resources and cost-share for best management practices. Our CISMA has helped identify, contain, or eradicate undesirable invasive species. We have hosted beach cleanups, highway cleanups, native plant and tree sales, tire recycling events, and held educational workshops to serve the natural resource needs in our county.

This work is a testament to the commitment and compassion of our partner agencies, our financial supporters, our volunteers, our board of directors, and our staff. It hasn't always been easy. We've had to adjust our processes and make hard decisions. The result of these efforts is undeniable.

Now, the big question is where do we go from here?
Our services are still expanding as this year we have been awarded a five-year grant program that will improve soil health and soil water holding capacity and will ultimately serve to protect both surface and groundwater quality and habitat. We will work towards empowering landowners to take the lead in protecting the land and water around them.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much" -Helen Keller

With gratitude,
Megan Boos

DISTRICT EMPLOYEES

MEGAN BOOS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LEXIE KASPER, ADMINISTRATIVE SPECIALIST
KEELY DUNHAM-ADKINS, WMCISMA COORDINATOR
NATALIE BEKINS, INVASIVE SPECIES PROJECT COORDINATOR
CARYN DAWSON, MAEAP TECHNICIAN
BENJAMIN JORDAN, CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN
SARAH BOWMAN, WATERSHED TECHNICIAN
BENJAMIN SAVOIE, DISTRICT FORESTER
ALEX SVOBODA, RCPP PROJECT MANAGER
KYLE HILDEBRANDT, SOIL CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN
KARA ERMATINGER, FOREST PEST TECHNICIAN
HALEY SWEET, FOREST PEST TECHNICIAN
ANNALEESE RASANEN, FOREST PEST TECHNICIAN
CODY HINTON, FOREST PEST TECHNICIAN
KYLE GALLAGHER, FOREST PEST TECHNICIAN

NRCS EMPLOYEES

HEATHER VARBONCOEUR, DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST. (HEATHER WILL BE MOVING TO A NEW ROLE WITH NRCS IN JANUARY 2022 AND WE WILL BE WELCOMING A NEW DC.)
NATHAN HELMS, FARM BILL SPECIALIST
KATIE DROSCHA, CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN

OUR PROGRAMS

- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)**
- **Bass River/ Deer Creek Restoration Project**
- **Crockery Creek/ Sand Creek Restoration Project**
- **Pigeon River Watershed Management Plan**
- **Farmland and Water Quality Conservation Initiative**
- **Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) Project**
- **Invasive Species Strike Team (WMCISMA)**
- **Forestry Assistance Program**
- **Native Plant and Tree Fundraisers**
- **Critical Dunes Education**
- **Vegetative Removal Assurance**
- **Volunteer Cleanups**

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman,
David Pyle

Vice Chairman,
Tim Van Dyke

Treasurer,
Douglas Grotenrath

Director,
Lester Langeland

Director,
Callie Melton

OUR NEW LOGO

OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

TREE SEEDLING AND NATIVE PLANT SALES

In 2021, the community continued to show great support for our Tree Seedling and Native Plant Sales. The funds from these events help cover important district funds that are not covered by our grants. They also supply quality, locally grown native plants to the community that provides numerous ecological benefits!

Tree Seedling Sale: $13,075

Native Plant Sales: $9,476

CRITICAL DUNES/VEGETATIVE REMOVAL ASSURANCE

The District can provide general information on Michigan's Critical Dunes. Programs for schools and organizations can be provided, tailoring length and content to the appropriate audience.

If an Ottawa County resident is building within a Critical Dune Area, the District can offer assistance in completing a Vegetation Removal Assurance (VRA) during the required permit process with EGLE. District staff can provide this service to the public for a fee. 13 VRA's were completed by the District in 2021.

Critical Dunes

Information and Education

MICHIGAN FORESTRY Assistance Program

FORESTRY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The District Forester for Barry, Allegan, and Ottawa Counties implements the Forestry Assistance Program (FAP). FAP assists forest landowners in making management decisions for their woods. The program provides on-site assessments and guidance to landowners and forestry professionals. These services are provided year-round at no cost.

In 2021 our District Forester, Ben Savoie, completed 98 site visits covering 2,640 acres. He also completed 60 referrals to public agencies and 78 referrals to private sector industries. He also held or participated in 3 outreach events and 50 media occurrences.

INVASIVE SPECIES

HEMLOCK WOOLLY ADELGID PROGRAM (HWA)

The West Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) has worked since 2018 to address hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) on private land. This past field season, the West Michigan CISMA was able to increase the capacity of the field crew from four to five Forest Pest Technicians. The Technicians spend the winter months surveying and collecting data in preparation for the summer treatment season. The surveys and treatments have been focused on the northernmost extent of the HWA population range in Michigan, which is primarily located in Mason County. During the 2021 field season, the Technicians were able to treat over 24,000 trees across more than 1,000 acres. This program is funded by the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program as well as the United States Forest Service Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Thank you to our partners and funders for this project!

STRIKE TEAM

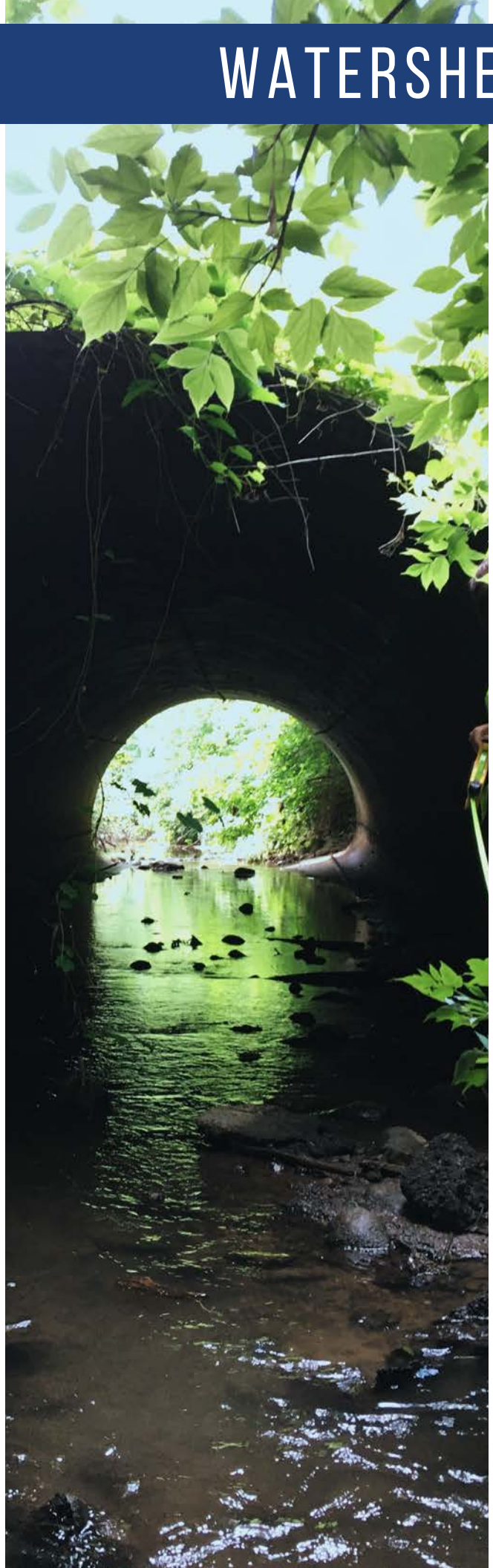
The West Michigan CISMA has strike teams that work out of three Conservation Districts in West Michigan. The strike teams work to address invasive plants on both public and private properties. The three offices that host a strike team are in Kent, Muskegon, and Ottawa counties. These strike teams work under a diverse funding stream of State and Federal grants, as well as for-hire work. This year the Ottawa Conservation District's strike team expanded from three to four crew members. This allowed all three teams to treat 846 sites, 90 of them being United States Forest Service areas. These treatments took place over 440 acres and addressed a multitude of invasive species, such as Japanese knotweed and European frog-bit. This fall the West Michigan CISMA also began a new campaign against Phragmites. The Ottawa and Muskegon Conservation Districts' strike teams will be able to survey 1000 acres and treat 500 acres along the Macatawa River, Kalamazoo River, Grand River, Muskegon River, and Pentwater River over the next year. This project is funded by the USFS through the Good Neighbor Authority Grant Program. We want to thank our funders and partners for their continued support.

West Michigan Cooperative
INVASIVE SPECIES
MANAGEMENT AREA

FOR HIRE WORK

One area of growth for the West Michigan CISMA is in fee-for-service work. This includes work that is not funded through grants, either due to the priority of the species or the location, but the landowner is willing to pay for the work. The goal is to provide an affordable option for landowners to address their invasive species and assist in the management of their properties to be healthy and resilient. These treatments are available for both invasive plants and hemlock woolly adelgid. We are hoping to continue to grow this service in the future!

WATERSHED PROGRAMS



BASS RIVER/DEER CREEK & CROCKERY CREEK/SAND CREEK RESTORATION PROGRAMS

These two programs are both funded by 319 non-point source grants from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). These projects are dedicated to reducing nutrients, sediment, and E. Coli levels in the Bass River, Deer Creek, Crockery Creek, and Sand Creek watersheds by providing technical assistance and cost-share funding for best management practices.

Cost share funded to BRDC: Almost 3000 acres of cover crops, 600 acres of no till, Over 30 farmers involved, 7 septic system replacements

Cost share funded to Crockery/Sand: Almost 2500 acres of cover crops, 500 acres of no till, 8 farmers involved (program only opened in August), 4 septic system replacements

PIGEON RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Ottawa Conservation District is developing a Watershed Management Plan for the Pigeon River Watershed, a designated trout stream, located in central Ottawa County. This plan will include information about water quality, sources of degradation, as well as priority areas and recommendations for protection or restoration.

We have collected E. coli and nutrient loading data at 12 sites throughout the watershed, macroinvertebrate, and habitat data, as well as fish survey data at 3 locations. We have also worked hard to document potential sources of pollution including streambank erosion, agricultural erosion, failing road-stream crossings, and more. This data, in addition to an assortment of GIS mapping and modeling tools, will help us better understand the watershed and its needs for the future. This plan is expected to be completed and accepted by EGLE in 2022, making the watershed eligible for future 319 grant funds for restoration.

AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSURANCE PROGRAM (MAEAP)

MAEAP in 2021: In the 2021 fiscal year, 17 risk assessments were completed in Ottawa County and 10 Farming systems were verified. In total, 89 Risk Reduction Practices were implemented including providing spill kits, emergency planning assistance, and environmentally sensitive area identification. This year, over $2,000 in financial assistance was provided for one fuel pad, one compost facility apron, and soil tests and spill kit supplies to help offset the cost of MAEAP verification. Lastly, 7/100 Cultivating Resilience Field Day attendees completed a phase one form showing interest in the MAEAP Program.

MAEAP 2021	Farmstead	Field Crops & Veggies	Orchards & Vineyards	Nurseries	Greenhouse	Livestock	Forest, Wetland, Habitat
Risk Assessments	8	5	1	1	2	0	0
Verifications	2	5	0	0	0	2	0

In July, the District welcomed new MAEAP Technician Caryn Dawson. Caryn is originally from Iowa and graduated from Iowa State University with degrees in Global Resource Systems and Horticulture and minors in Animal Science and Spanish.

CULTIVATING RESILIENCE 2021

Photo by Raecale Stull

Despite the continued pandemic conditions, Ottawa and Allegan Conservation District's partnered with Dykhuis Farms, the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, and the Outdoor Discovery Center to safely put together a field day for farmers in the area. The Cultivating Resilience field day brought in over 100 participants including representatives from the ag industry, local farmers, and other relevant organizations. Participants enjoyed a variety of professional speakers, breakout sessions, and hands-on demonstrations.

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE

NRCS, a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) agency, assists farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to ensure the sustainability of agricultural productions and the protection of natural resources.

Amount of cost-share spent in 2021: $75,078
***Lower than normal due to material costs**
Amount of cost-share obligated in new contracts in 2021: $479,213

Conservation Applied in 2021:
Cover Crops- 250 acres
Irrigation Water Management-259 acres
Integrated Pest Management- 573 acres
Windbreak Establishment- 1,926 feet
Grazing Management- 161 acres
Nutrient Management- 315 acres

USDA NRCS U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

VOLUNTEERS

We want to say how grateful we are for the volunteers that helped us at our Annual Tree Sale, our Native Plant Sales, our beach cleanups, our highway cleanups, and our scrap tire collection event.

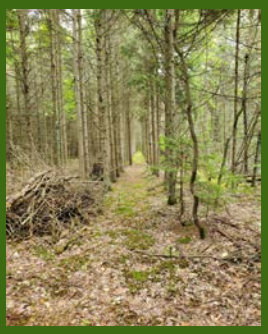
Thanks to everyone's hard work, we cleaned up 141 pounds of trash off of our local beaches, 178 bags of trash along the side of the highway, and we collected over 2500 tires to be recycled.

We're thankful that everyone participated in social distancing and safety guidelines and we were able to get out there and care for our beautiful county!

FINANCIALS

2021-2022 Appropriations and Budget		
	FY 22	
Revenue (By source type) *Do not list individual grants. Do not list Activity numbers. All Revenue must be in one of the following*		
State Funds	$	413,359.57
Federal Funds	$	675,685.74
Contributions from Local Units	$	100,000.00
Charges for Services	$	72,433.89
Interest and Rentals	$	300.00
Tree Sales	$	50,000.00
Local Grant Funds		
Other Revenue		
Total Revenue	$	1,311,779.20
Expenditures (By Activity) *Use required activity numbers below and discretionary activity numbers for other activities. Include only those activities which apply to your District.*		
281 Operations	$	200,000.00
294 Reforestation	$	25,000.00
282 MAEAP Grant	$	60,000.00
291 Vegetation Management		
299 Bass/Deer 319 Grant	$	63,000.00
299 Crockery/Sand Creek	$	267,400.00
296 Critical Dune Education	$	-
Vegitation Removal Assurance	$	1,000.00
288 MISGP D-18 FB	$	32,775.81
288 MISGP D-19		
288 MISGP D-20	$	89,760.33
288 MISGP C-18	$	21,074.45
289 MISGP HWA T	$	39,978.53
289 MISGP HWA S		
289 MISGP HWA TNC	$	7,752.70
USFS Phrag	$	45,000.00
USFS Invasive Species-18	$	7,818.99
Good neighbor authority 20		
Good neighbor authority 21	$	22,500.00
Good Neighbor Authority HWA 21	$	45,000.00
290 GLFT Pigeon		
290 GLFT Sand		
298 Sand Creek Project		
USFS GLRI HWA-20	$	66,001.00
Scrap Tire		
Fee for service Invasives (Non-cost share)	$	5,000.00
Suggested Service Costs (Grant cost share)	$	2,500.00
Pigeon River 319	$	36,000.00
NOAA B-WET		
MACC Ag-GLC	$	18,290.00
MACC Stormwater	$	6,340.00
MACC Trash Free Waters	$	1,862.00
RCPP	$	92,000.00
NACD	$	51,800.00
Other Expenses		
Total Expenditures	$	1,207,853.81
Budget Balance	$	95,504.43
Beginning Fund Balance *(Required)*	$	103,925.39
Ending Fund Balance *(Required)*	$	199,429.82

"HERE IS YOUR COUNTRY. CHERISH THESE NATURAL WONDERS, CHERISH THE NATURAL RESOURCES, CHERISH THE HISTORY AND ROMANCE AS A SACRED HERITAGE, FOR YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN."
-THEODORE ROOSEVELT



GET INVOLVED

Our board meetings take place on the first Tuesday of every month at 7:00 PM at 16731 Ferris St. Grand Haven, MI 49417. These meetings are open to the public. We will adhere to any future capacity guidelines and any meetings that become virtual will be posted on our website.

On our website or FaceBook page, you will find information on upcoming volunteer events. We offer a variety of activities for individuals, families, or organizations.

You can sign up to receive our quarterly e-newsletter on our website at ottawacd.org.

2022 ANNOUNCEMENTS

In 2022, we will say goodbye and thank you to Lester Langeland, who is retiring from the Board of Directors after many years of service. Our 2022 Annual Meeting on March 15th will look at the history of the district and Lester's contributions to the conservation of Ottawa County's resources.

This coming year, we will also be completing and publishing an official strategic plan for the district. We are excited to create this framework to continue serving the county to the best of our abilities.

In addition, we will also be publishing our Conservation Needs Assessment. This document is updated and published every 5 years and looks at the current state of the natural resources in the county and identifies potential needs.

OTTAWA
CONSERVATION
DISTRICT
CHECK IN
AND PAY

WHO CAN BE VERIFIED?
MAEAP

OTTAWA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

CONTACT US:

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