MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION of CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Five-Year, Long-Range Plan
Ottawa Conservation District

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Organization of the Ottawa Conservation District:

-A governmental subdivision of the State of Michigan and a public body corporate and politic, exercising public powers, as outlined in Conservation District Law, Act 463 of 1998.

- On May 8th, 1938, in response to soil conservation concerns, agricultural leaders and other landholders of Ottawa County created the Ottawa Conservation District through county referendum. Forming the District enabled the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide a technical agent to assist private landowners in solving conservation problems.

Function of the Ottawa Conservation District:

To make available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local landowners with conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources.

Mission of the Ottawa Conservation District:

The mission of the Michigan Ottawa County Conservation District is to be your local resource for natural resource management, helping people conserve, maintain and improve our natural resources and environment for future generations.

Vision of the Ottawa Conservation District:

The Conservation District is an essential ingredient for a healthy environment and the quality of life in Ottawa County, Michigan. The community looks to us for information and guidance, follows our lead and considers us a wise investment. The results of our work are evident throughout the County. We continue to learn, grow and develop in order to meet conservation goals.

Values of the Ottawa Conservation District:

Our work is guided and informed by our beliefs and commitments to:

- Inclusiveness – we respect people, value diversity and are committed to equality.
- Participation – we value and recognize the contribution of board members, employees and volunteers within our organization and communities.
- Service – we strive to provide excellent assistance to all customers
- Commitment – we are dedicated to the citizens and natural resources of Ottawa County
- Integrity – we are dedicated to openness, honesty, and hard work

Operations Priorities:

Focus Area 1: Ensure the long-term sustainability of the Conservation District and the delivery of its programs and projects by strengthening procedures, practices and infrastructure.

Focus Area 2: Expand surface and groundwater projects by delivering a groundwater program to increase the Conservation District's impact through residential, agricultural, and business initiatives.

Focus Area 3: Routinely monitor emerging resource management needs and position the Conservation District to respond appropriately on behalf of the community.

Natural Resource Priorities:

1. *Non-point Source pollution*
2. *Groundwater*
3. *Reforestation*
4. *Critical Dune Stabilization*
5. *Terrestrial and Aquatic invasive species management*
6. *Forest Pest Invasive Species Management*
7. *Agricultural: Soil Health*

Measures of Success:

Natural Resource Priority: Non-point Source pollution
Funding Source(s): 319 Funding: Crockery Creek and Sand Creek Restoration Project
Measurement Tool(s): Quarterly reports, STEPL, SSIE (Septic System Improvement Estimator), and Final Report

Natural Resource Priority: Groundwater
Funding Source(s): USDA RCPP grant, NACD TA 21 and TA 22 grant, MAEAP grant
Measurement Tool(s): RCPP Tracking
Expected Outcomes: Environmental outcomes will be measurable across multiple resource concerns. Reducing sediment and nutrient loss from farm fields, while improving soil health is the highest priority. A goal of enrolling an additional 11,970 acres in conservation practices, and 125 acres in farmland preservation over the 5-year project would result in an estimated annual reduction of 600 tons of sediment, and 24,000 lbs. of nutrients (20,000 Nitrogen; 4,000 Phosphorus). Economic outcomes include the influx of financial assistance for conservation practices to improve the resiliency of farms through conservation and soil health improvement practices, all of which will ensure the long-term viability of farmland. Farmers will not need to worry about the added costs associated with implementing new stewardship practices and programs, and instead can focus on farming profitably while prioritizing conservation. The social outcomes of this project will be streamlined communication between partners, partners, and producers, and among producers themselves. A project of this magnitude will show a marked improvement in NRCS's relationship with local agriculture. Spending more time with producers speaking about issues they are facing and how conservation practices can help to address them will give farmers another tool to continue working in innovative ways to produce high quality products while protecting the environment.

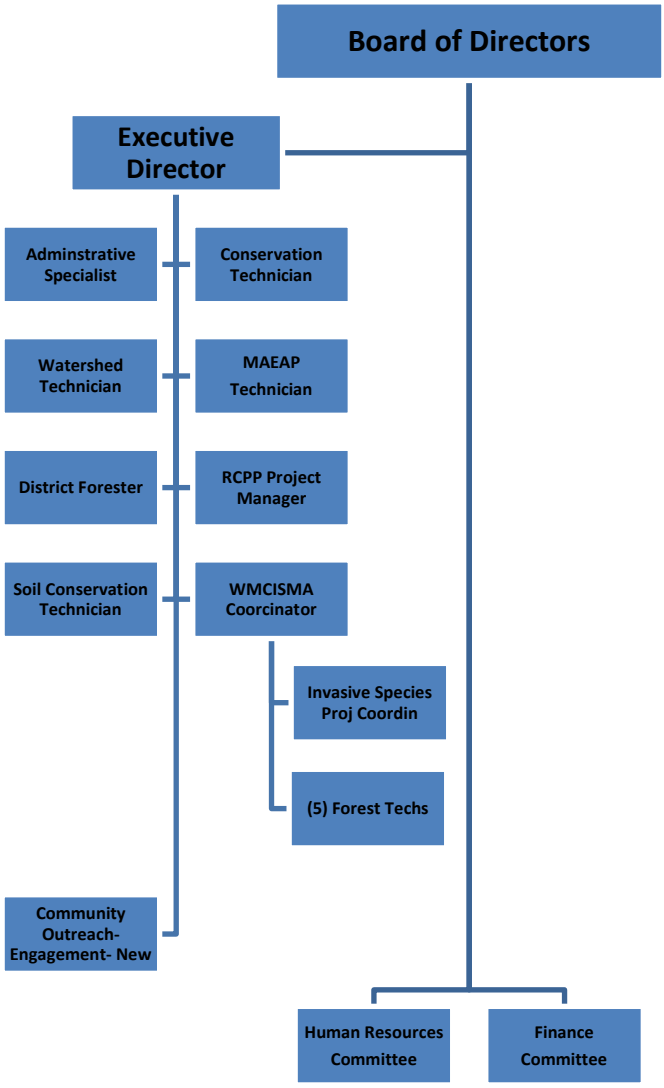
Natural Resource Priority: Reforestation
Funding Source(s): Revenue from Sales
Measurement Tool(s): Number of trees sold, and review made in comparison to the year prior
Natural Resource Priority: Critical Dunes Stabilization
Funding Source(s): County funding, Vegetation Removal Permits
Measurement Tool(s): (1) Plan for expending remaining critical dune restricted funds (2) Conduct and write vegetation removal assurance (VRA) plans & permits

Natural Resource Priority: Terrestrial and Aquatic Invasive Species Management
Funding Source(s): MISGP CORE/Project 22, USDA Phragmites grant, Good Neighbor Authority Grant, and Sustain our Great Lakes Grant
Measurement Tool(s): Documented grant deliverables in required in the grant reports

Natural Resource Priority: Forest Pest Invasive Species Management
Funding Source(s): MISGP HWA 20 and MISGP HWA 22 and Good Neighbor Authority grant
Measurement Tool(s): Documented grant deliverables in required in the grant reports

Natural Resource Priority: Agriculture
Funding Source(s): MDARD MAEAP Grant, and Produce Safety Grant
Measurement Tool(s): Documented grant deliverables in required in the grant reports

Staffing Needs:



Strategic Partnerships:

EGLE, MDARD, DNR, USDA, USFS, NACD, MAEAP, NRCS, SOGL, MACD, Outdoor Discovery Center, Ottawa County Water Resource Commission, Ottawa County Department of Strategic Impact, Parks and Recreation, and the Ottawa County Commissioners.

Benchmarks, Actions, and Timelines

Operations Priority: Ensure the long-term sustainability of the Conservation District and the delivery of its programs and projects by strengthening procedures, practices and infrastructure.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION GRID

Focus Area 1: Ensure the long-term sustainability of the Conservation District and the delivery of its programs and projects by strengthening procedures, practices and infrastructure.				
GOAL	**STRATEGY**	**TIMING**	**LEAD**	**MEASURE**
Invest in the OCD staff to ensure a high performing team.	Investigate opportunities to provide health insurance.	By Sept 30, 2023	HR Committee	● Amount of grant funds ● Number of landowners served. ● Amount of revenue from tree and native plant sales ● Amount of program funding and percent increase ● Number of partnerships and alliances formed. ● # Website visits ● # Facebook Friends # Twitter and ISG followers
	Increase professional development opportunities to ensure use of best practices.	Ongoing	HR Committee	
	Update human resources policies and procedures as needed.	By Sept 30, 2023	HR Committee	
	Document operating procedures and store them in a central, shared system.	By Sept 30, 2025	Executive Dir/ Administrative Specialist	
	Refine onboarding and orientation of new staff to ensure effective transitions.	Ongoing	Executive Dir	
Strengthen board practices	Board members ensure effective communication and preparation by members for board and committee meetings and other assignments.	Ongoing	Board Chair	
	Board members remain knowledgeable about OCD work and committee needs.	Ongoing	Board members	
	Hire a professional to support this work.	By Sept 30, 2024, if funding available	Executive Dir	

Expand community engagement through outreach and education.	Create a job description and salary range for the position.	By Sept 30, 2024	Executive Dir	
	Identify funding to support position.	By Sept 30, 2024	Executive Dir	
Increase visibility in the County through marketing and public relations initiatives.	Continue to refine annual marketing/ public relations plan to coordinate visibility activities.	Ongoing	Executive Dir and staff	

Natural Resource Priority: Expand surface and groundwater projects by delivering a groundwater program to increase the Conservation District's impact through residential, agricultural, and business initiatives.

Focus Area 2: Expand surface and groundwater projects by delivering a groundwater program to increase the Conservation District's impact through residential, agricultural, and business initiatives.				
GOAL	**STRATEGY**	**TIMING**	**LEAD**	**MEASURE**
Promote the positive use of agriculture land through groundwater management practices.	Offer information regarding Ottawa County's groundwater resources, water conservation strategies, land use planning techniques, well-water permitting procedures, and water and wastewater infrastructure expansions.	Ongoing	Soil Conservation Tech; NCRS Watershed Tech	● # identified funding sources ● # landowners served through NRCS ● # meetings attended for groundwater mgt and related activities ● # workshops and seminars conducted ● Create database framework
	Strengthen partnerships that protect Ottawa County groundwater	Ongoing	Executive Director/ staff	
Promote the positive use of land by homeowners, businesses, and municipalities through groundwater management practices.	Provide education, outreach, and resources for integrating native plant species and water recycling alternatives into developed landscapes.	Ongoing	Executive Director/ staff/ Community Partners	● # identified funding sources ● # participants in workshops and seminars ● # orders for Native Plant Sale ● # participants in Native Plant workshops ● # meetings attended for groundwater mgt and related activities ● # partnerships formed
	Secure program funding	By Sept 2023; ongoing as needed	Executive Dir/ staff	
	Leverage funding to seek cost-share assistance.	Ongoing	Executive Dir/ staff/ ComPartners	
	Strengthen partnerships by bridging connections and providing resources to landowners, businesses, and municipalities.	Ongoing	Executive Director/ staff/ Community Partners	

Natural Resource Priority: Routinely monitor emerging resource management needs and position the Conservation District to respond appropriately on behalf of the community.

Focus Area 3: Routinely monitor emerging resource management needs and position the Conservation District to respond appropriately on behalf of the community.				
GOAL	**STRATEGY**	**TIMING**	**LEAD**	**MEASURE**
Remain knowledgeable about resource management needs and best practices in addressing them.	Participate routinely in professional development.	ongoing	Exec Dir/ staff and Board	
	Maintain access to and working relationships with resource management experts outside Ottawa County.	Ongoing	Exec Dir/ staff	
	Monitor other Ottawa County/ regional plans and reports that may have significance for resource management.	Ongoing	Exec Dir/ staff	
Repeat Needs Assessment	Determine process for needs assessment.	By Dec 2026	Exec Dir/ staff	
	Identify funding for needs assessment.	By Dec 2026	Exec Dir/ staff	
	Conduct needs assessment.	By Dec 2026	Exec Dir/ staff	