

# Kalamazoo Conservation District Annual Report 2020



*"Protecting Soil & Water for Generations;  
not only today's generation but future generations."*

## Table of Contents

Board of Directors and Staff.....	3
Board of Directors Meeting Schedule.....	3
Letter from the District manager.....	4
2020 Annual Meeting.....	4
Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP).....	5
Barry, Calhoun, Kalamazoo -Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (BCK-CISMA).....	5
Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).....	6
Urban and Community Forestry Education Events.....	6
Produce Safety Program.....	7
Wildlife Habitat Enhancement.....	7
Citizen Science Program.....	7
Friend of the District Awards .....	8
District Partner Award.....	8

Kalamazoo Conservation District is a governmental agency established under state law to carry out programs for conservation, use and development of soil, water, and related resources at the local level.

Established in 1946, KCD is an independent county level resource assisting Kalamazoo County residents in resolving natural resource concerns. The District is self-funded, serving the public with revenue obtained through an annual tree and shrub fundraiser sale, grants, sponsorships and donations.

At KCD, we partner with federal and state agencies to coordinate and implement conservation and environmental programs throughout the community. We have capabilities in protection, development and management of natural resources.

## Conservation District Board of Directors

Ed Cagney, Chair

Lynn Coville, Vice Chair

Mike Klooster, Director

Tricia Keala, Director

\*\*Todd Weinberg served as a director of the KCD board for several years. He was a third generation farmer growing raising corn, seed corn, soybeans and green beans on a family farm dating back to 1937. He passed away in July 2020. We are grateful for his dedication and service to the conservation district.

## Conservation District Staff

Linda Zabik, MAEAP Technician

Elizabeth Rochow, Manager

Fallon Chabala, BCK-CISMA Invasive Species Coordinator—housed at Barry CD

Patrick Gordon, Produce Safety Technician—housed at Berrien CD

## Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Staff

Di'Shun Melbert, District Conservationist

Jerad Harmon, Conservation Technician—housed at Branch CD

\*\*Jean Gagliardo served as the District Conservationist in Kalamazoo County for several years and retired in April 2020. We would like to thank her for work with local farmers and land owners in promoting conservation practices and programs and wish her a happy retirement!

### **2021 BOARD SCHEDULE**

The KCD Board is scheduled to meet at 8 am on the third Friday of the month. Please check the district website for up-to-date meeting information.

Everyone is welcome to attend!

**January 15**  
**February 19**  
**March 19**  
**April 16**  
**May 21**  
**June 18**  
**July 16**  
**August 20**  
**September 17**  
**October 15**  
**November 19**  
**December 17**



Dear Friends of the District,

2020 was certainly a different year for all of us. Despite the challenges, the district was able to deliver programs and provide support to county residents. We held our annual meeting program in January 2020 and were able to sell trees in the spring through our yearly Reforestation event. We continued to actively provide land owner assistance through MAEAP (Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program), BCK-CISMA (Barry, Calhoun, Kalamazoo—Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area), and Produce Safety Programs. In addition, we continued restoration work at the Gourdneck State Game Area and provided several educational workshops. For several years, we have educated area 5th graders during a day-long spring Conservorama field event. Unfortunately, this school event was cancelled, but the generous grant from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation was extended for use in 2021. We hope you enjoy reading about our accomplishments and know that all of these are possible only with the support of Kalamazoo County residents. Whether you attend our annual meetings or educational programs, purchase trees at our sale, or participate in conservation programs, thank you for joining us in conservation efforts. As our vision states “Together, we can make a difference in the protection of our natural resources.”

Elizabeth Rochow  
District Manager

---

## Annual Meeting January 2020

The Annual meeting took place at WMU’s Fetzer Center on January 27, 2020. Brian McKenzie presented “Benefits of an Urban Tree Canopy”. Jeremy Jubenville of Michigan State University Extension received the 2019 District Partner Award. The Conservation Farms of the Year 2019 Award was presented to Gijsbert Vanden Bogerd of Vanden Bogerd Farms and Peter Vanden Bogerd of Bogerd Farms. Mike Klooster was re-elected as a Director of the KCD Board.



## [MAEAP: Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program](#)

Water pollution comes from many sources, and some of it comes from farms. That's why Kalamazoo Conservation District is helping farmers to enroll in MAEAP. This program offers assistance and recognition to farmers who reduce erosion and runoff from private land into public waters. This program is free, voluntary and 100% confidential. Farmers who earn MAEAP recognition receive a sign to display on their farm. Perhaps you've see these signs around the Kalamazoo County and other parts of the State. This sign indicates that this farm is a top steward in the community. In 2020, MAEAP program distributed \$3,000 in Cost Share, supported 228 Risk reductions, enrolled 6 new MAEAP verifications and 15 reverifications, conducted 51 farm visits, participated in 6 educational events including Greenhouse Emergency Preparedness and Woodlot & Forest Management workshops. Contact Linda Zabik for more information.



---

## [Barry Calhoun Kalamazoo-CISMA](#)



Our invasive species team surveys, prioritizes, and treats invasive species outbreaks of greatest concern. In doing so, they surveyed over 7,700 acres and treated 84 acres for invasive plant species in 2020. They have also conducted Red Swamp Crayfish surveys in 43 lakes throughout the Barry-Calhoun-Kalamazoo area, surveying over 7,400 acres total. Fortunately red swamp crayfish have not been found outside the Sunset Lake area. With additional help from the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Gun Lake Tribe, efforts remained high in the Sunset Lake area. Since the beginning of June, there were 15 nighttime management efforts in 2020. In total, 735 red swamp crayfish individuals were captured and removed.

With the help of The Stewardship Network, the second Shoreline Symposium was adapted into a four-part webinar series held in February 2021. These webinars can be found on The Stewardship Network's YouTube channel under the SW X SW Corner CISMA playlist!

## NRCS Partnership

Each year the Conservation District works directly with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service to recruit agricultural producers for the Federal Farm Bill Programs such as Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). These programs not only offer valuable technical assistance to Kalamazoo County farmers and landowners, helping them become better stewards of the land, but also contribute to the local economy by bringing in thousands of federal dollars to fund conservation practices. This money has a direct impact on the success of local farms, businesses, and contractors.

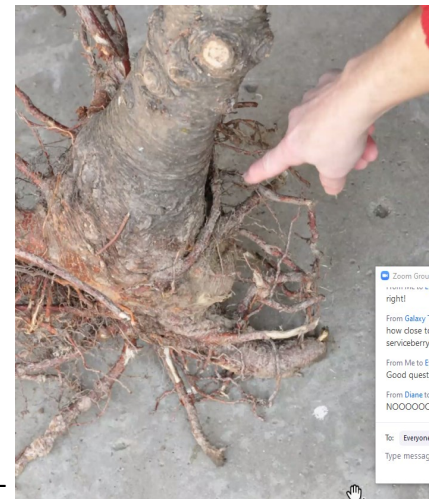
NRCS also provides funding for individual Forest Management Plans which provide an inventory of existing conditions, and will be developed with the landowner's goals in mind. In addition to being a good management tool, this certified Forest Management Plan can then be used to qualify for additional state and local programs and can serve as a basis to apply for USDA cost share dollars to implement practices such as Invasive Species Control or Forest Stand Improvement as recommended by your forester.

---

## Urban and Community Forestry Education Events

The Kalamazoo Conservation District was awarded a grant through the Urban and Community Forestry Program to provide programs and workshops for community residents to improve public awareness of the benefits of preserving and expanding community tree cover as well as to help build community capacity to manage and care for trees through training and education. In January Brian McKenzie presented the "Benefits of an Urban Tree Canopy" at the District's 2020 annual meeting. "Tree Selection: How to Decide What to Plant" was given by Scott VanWyk in February. He provided guidance as to what to consider when planning for and choosing trees to plant. The remainder of the planned tree programs were postponed until the fall and were transformed into virtual programs. In early October, Janet Macunovich and Steven Nikkila, professional instructors and gardeners, discussed best tree planting practices. In late October, the basics of growing fruit trees at home was shared by Bill Shane of MSU. Our final program, a MAEAP field event, was Woodlot & Forest Management which included the importance of forest management, available forest assistance programs, and funding options.

We would like to thank all of our partners who contributed to the excellence of these programs: the City of Portage, Oshtemo Township and Oshtemo Friends of the Parks, ReLeaf Michigan, Steinkraus Forest Management LLC, Bill Shane, Bruce MacKellar, MSU Extension, BCK-CISMA, and NRCS. Funding for these programs was made possible for the local community through the support of the DNR, Urban and Community Forestry Program and the USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry Program .



## Produce Safety Program

The overall goal of this program is to assist growers to reach or maintain compliance with sometimes tricky regulations, and educate on best practices in the prevention of contamination by microbial pathogens that impact human health via fresh produce. Patrick Gordon, the Technician serving Allegan, Berrien, Kalamazoo, and Van Buren Counties, provides many tools to help local growers assess risks involved with the growing, handling, harvesting, storing, and transportation of fresh produce covered by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule. All services offered are free, voluntary, and confidential. A new Produce Safety Technician website, [www.miofps.org](http://www.miofps.org), is now providing more program information and assistance.



## Wildlife Habitat Enhancement

Since December 2019, considerable work had been completed in the Gourdneck State Game Area with the assistance of the Michigan DNR Wildlife Habitat Grant to enhance wildlife habitat. These grants are funded through a portion of hunting and fishing licenses that are sold each year with the purpose of providing funding to conservation partners to assist the Wildlife Division with developing or improving wildlife habitat for game species.



This project is part of the long term restoration process of 65 acres to oak savanna community. This project is developing and maintaining wildlife openings by opening the canopy through selective and targeted timber cutting and removing some of the undesirable barrens tree and shrub species. Stands of planted red pines have been felled and current work is being done to reduce considerable undesirable shrub understory. The City of Portage Public Works is an important partner with this project. Black River Habitats, LLC is currently working to manage the undesirable and invasive understory species. This project was to be completed by the fall of 2021, but may be extended for an additional year due to working restrictions in 2020.

## Citizen Science Program

Wanting to encourage citizen science efforts in our county, KCD hosted an informational program in February 2020. Those participating included Bird Friendly Kalamazoo, Michigan Butterfly Network, Winter Feeder Count Survey, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, SW Michigan Bee Watch, Midwest Invasive Species Network, and Budburst. Each of these organizations shared information about their programs and how citizens can participate in their work. We would like to thank Meredith Zettlemeier, a doctoral candidate at MSU and KCD volunteer, for organizing this event.



# 2020 Kalamazoo Conservation District Awards

## Friend of the District Awards

We are thankful to have many district friends and we would like to recognize two with our Friend of the District Award.



The first recipient is *Karen High*, Oshtemo Township Director of Parks. Karen facilitated the use of Oshtemo Township locations for programs including the Citizen Science Program. Both the tree planting workshop and the Woodlot & Forest management workshops were to be held at the Drake Farmstead before they were later moved to a virtual format. In addition, Karen assisted KCD by locating equipment for programs, created a Powerpoint presentation, worked with us to film at the Farmstead as part of the fall woodlot and forestry program, and participated in the live Q&A session of the webinar.

Also receiving the Friend of the District Award are foresters *Chris D'Hulster* and *Jeff Steinkraus* of Steinkraus Forestry Management LLC. Chris and Jeff answered our questions and provided information about forestry management programs. In preparing for the virtual Woodlot and Forestry Management Workshop, they made time for us to tape an interview and demonstration out in the woods. Chris and Jeff also provided expertise in the live Q&A session of the webinar.



## District Partner Award

We have awarded the *City of Portage* with our District Partner Award. The City of Portage has been a terrific partner with KCD on several projects and programs.



The City of Portage has been instrumental in work with the Wildlife Habitat Enhancement project at the Gourdneck State Game Area. Over 65 acres of the game area are being restored to an Oak Savanna habitat which will support more wildlife diversity. Throughout the winter of 2020, the City of Portage provided work crews and equipment used to fell trees in the northwest unit of the game area. This area was populated with aging red pines and its location made it difficult for tree removal. The Department of Public works was able to provide expertise in selectively cutting these trees. In addition, the snowplow crews kept the parking lot cleared of snow to enabling additional work to continue throughout the winter of 2020-2021.

The City of Portage Parks division also partnered with the district by providing event promotion and program space at Schrier Park for two workshops as part of the Urban and Community Forestry Education Series. "Tree Selection— How to Decide What to Plant" was held at the park in February 2020. The second scheduled workshop at the park was later held as a virtual program.

A big thank you to Karen, Jeff, Chris and the City of Portage staff by partnering with KCD and supporting our conservation efforts in Kalamazoo County!