

October 2023

Calhoun Conservation District



Fall Newsletter 2023



ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year October 1, 2022—September 30, 2023

Board of Directors

Brian Huggett, Board Chair
Kent VanSickle, Treasurer
Linda Kubiak, Director
Paul Egnatuk, Past Director
Mark Karaba, Director
Gregory Fountain
Associate Director
Sheryl Proteau, Newly
Elected Director

Staff

Maureen Reed
District Manager
Isiah Strand
Watershed Coordinator
Open: MAEAP Technician
Calhoun-Jackson Counties

Partners

Jack Knorek
Regional Coordinator,
SW Michigan Conservation
Programs-Environmental
Stewardship, MDARD
Colleen Reynolds, EA
Accountant
Barry Associates, Inc.
Chris Corgan
District Conservationist
Natural Resource Conser-
vation Service (NRCS)
Megan Fawcett
Conservationist
Natural Resource Conser-
vation Service (NRCS)

Calhoun Conservation District Highlights

Calhoun Conservation District held the Annual Meeting on Tuesday, September 19th from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Kiwanis Club of Battle Creek's Youth Conservation Area, located on 15 Mile Road in Convis Township. Budget appropriations, an election to fill three open board vacancies, the meeting, and a casual picnic dinner at the pavilion overlooking Big Marsh Lake rounded out the evening

Accomplishments during the past fiscal year include completion of the Nottawa Creek Watershed Plan, funded through a SAW Grant, administered by EGLE. Isiah Strand, Watershed Coordinator spent weeks wading the stream and banks for his studies. Research over the last two years resulted in a comprehensive watershed plan that outlines the strengths to build upon and for maintaining a healthy watershed.

Garfield Lake Outlet Drain Stream Restoration, funded by the EPA, US Fish & Wildlife and the MIDNR, in addition to the Calhoun Conservation District, was paused, due to prohibitive engineering and implementation expenses. Alternative drain restoration studies are being sought for future projects.

Educational Outreach programs included participation in the Conservation Field Day for 5th graders held at the Kiwanis Youth Conservation Area at Baker Sanctuary. A display of pollinators through brightly illustrated posters served as inspiration for native plantings.

Calhoun Conservation District hosted the Annual Summer 2023 Meeting of MACD Region 8 which included the staff and board directors from eight districts in SW Michigan. The event was held at the Kiwanis Youth Conservation Area, with speaker Dan Moilenan, MACD Executive Director highlighting conservation efforts state-wide.

Calhoun Conservation District

13464 Preston Dr., Suite 120
Marshall, Michigan 49068

Phone 269-781-4867 ext. 5
E-mail: calhouncd@gmail.com
Website: calhouncd.org

The Spring Tree Sale, Truax Flex II no-till drill rental for planting native fields, and hunting lease for the responsible land management of CCD owned properties provides operational funding. Additional support comes from Calhoun County Budget Appropriations, Michigan Department of Agriculture Resource Development (MDARD) and the Marshall Community Foundation.

Special thanks for the support!

Calhoun Conservation District

Beautiful Bluebirds Continue to Thrive



Eastern bluebirds are described in Wikipedia “as a small North American migratory thrush found in open woodlands, farmlands, and orchards. The bright-blue breeding plumage of the male, easily observed on a wire or open perch, makes this species a favorite of birdwatchers.”

Bluebirds prefer open country habitat with scattered trees, farms, roadsides. The brilliant bluebirds breed in semi-open fields, including cut-over or burned areas, forest clearings, farm country, and open pine woods. City lots or suburbs where there are extensive lawns can provide nesting sites, as well.

Eastern bluebirds can be spotted in the eastern parts of North and Central America from southern Canada into the country of Nicaragua. They also dwell on the islands of Cuba and Bermuda. The eastern bluebird is the state bird of New York and Missouri.

The diet of eastern bluebirds consists of beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, and caterpillars. As the seasons changes, weather becomes cooler, and insects are scarce, bluebirds feed on fall fruits and berries.

For many years, Eastern bluebirds declined, due to habitat loss that provided nesting sites.

In recent years, the bluebird population has stabilized in Michigan, from the efforts of the Michigan Bluebird Society and individuals to restore and maintain their nesting habitats.

“Because of habitat loss, environmental pollution, and competition of non-native bird species (House Sparrows and European Starlings), bluebirds have suffered large declines compared to their original numbers. However, bluebirds have been shown to thrive in areas where there is human-provided housing that is actively monitored.” Michigan Bluebird Society offers ways to protect and help increase the populations of the eastern bluebird habitat.

Putting up a nesting box is the easiest and most important thing you can do. Not only are you providing support to the bluebird population, but watching a pair of adults build a nest, lay eggs, and feed their young is an enjoyable and rewarding past time.

Michigan Bluebird Society, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to helping bluebirds and other native cavity nesting bird species in the Michigan. For more information or to become a member, visit their website: Michiganbluebirds.org.

Article researched by Maureen Reed



Special thanks to Calhoun Conservation District Board of Directors, Staff and Partners for their dedication and support in 2023 to serve the public with local conservation.

Nottawa Creek Watershed Management Plan Completed

Beginning in October 2021, newly hired watershed staff began the arduous task of studying environmental components of Nottawa Creek. Waters of Nottawa Creek flow through four counties that include Calhoun, Branch, St. Joseph, and Kalamazoo.

Calhoun Conservation District was awarded the grant to develop the Nottawa Creek Watershed Management Plan by the Environmental Great Lake & Energy (EGLE) of Michigan. The Stormwater, Asset Management and Wastewater Grant (SAW Grant). The grant funding is designed to help communi-

ties develop an asset management plan for stormwater and wastewater collection systems.

Isiah Strand, Watershed Coordinator completed the Nottawa Creek Watershed Management Plan in September 2023 with the technical support provided by Brian Huggett, District Chair. The studies included interviewing land owners, wading the stream waters banks, and hiking the fields surrounding the watershed.

The research data was compiled in the comprehensive Nottawa Creek Watershed Plan for future work to continue maintaining the healthy watershed.



Michigan Association of Conservation Districts Plans Fall Conference

Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) plans to hold the Fall Annual Convention at the Shanty Creek Conference Center on December 3 –6, 2023. Dan Moilanen MACD Executive Director and staff have planned workshops and trainings for the benefit of conservation districts throughout Michigan

MACD is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization established in 1937 through the monumental Soil Conservation District Law in response to the Dust Bowl and extreme drought across the country. The Association consists of 75 locally-led Conservation Districts that assist farmers, producers, and foresters with implementing conservation practices across Michigan's 83 counties. To learn more about the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, visit macd.org.



Kalamazoo Trout Unlimited Utilize Waders for Youth

Greg Potter, Kalamazoo Trout Unlimited member, coordinated with the Calhoun Conservation District to obtain waders that will provide water access for youth groups to local streams and rivers. Maureen Reed, District Manager, noted the "Trout Unlimited youth program was the best fit to put the waders to good use for teaching outdoor water studies and management."



What Conservations Districts Do...

Locally led conservation is local people, with leadership from conservation districts, assessing natural resource conditions and needs; setting goals; identifying programs and other resources needed to meet these goals; developing proposals and recommendations; implementing solutions; and measuring their success.



Michigan Association of Conservation Districts offers state-wide programs, and trainings during the year for their 75 Conservation Districts. Calhoun Conservation District directors and staff attend conferences and trainings to gain knowledge and relevant information to promote conservation practices.

Successful Spring Tree Sale 2023

Calhoun Conservation District held the annual Spring Tree Sale on April 21, 2023 at the Calhoun County Floral Hall. As one of the largest tree sales held by the District in recent years, over 7,000 tree seedlings were sorted and distributed to more than 100 customers.

The sale of tree seedlings and native wildflowers has been a long-standing tradition for Michigan Conservation Districts to raise funds and awareness for conservation. Help support local conservation efforts by supporting the annual tree sale. Spring Tree Sale 2024 will be held the week of Earth Day in April 2024.

Sandhill Crane Migration Viewing



Kiwanis Club of Battle Creek's Youth Conservation Area at Baker Sanctuary is a perfect location to view Sandhill Cranes during peak migration in SW Michigan.

The area will be open to the public the last weekend of the season for viewing the Sandhill Crane migration.

Saturday and Sunday, October 28 & 29 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Visitors are asked to respect the area and safety by supervising children on their hikes. Bring binoculars or scopes for viewing!



Calhoun Conservation District
District Manager
Applications are being accepted by November 1, 2023 for position of District Manager. A complete job description is posted on the Website: calhouncd.org

Calhoun Conservation District
13464 Preston Dr., Suite 120
Marshall, Michigan 49068

Phone: 269-781-4867 ext. 5
e-mail: calhouncd@gmail.com