

Fall has been beautiful for Conservation work!



## Mason-Lake Conservation District

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## Events

### **Scottville Beekeepers Upcoming Event**

Come meet the folks behind the buzz! Local beekeepers from all over Mason County (Oceana, Manistee and Lake counties as well) will be on hand to share the amazingly varied tastes of their liquid gold. There will also be demonstrations, and kid activities

at this free event.

The Scottville Beekeepers meet on the third Thursday of each month at the Scottville Library, 6:30 to 8:30 pm. The group is free to anyone interested in becoming a beekeeper or simply in learning how to best support these vital pollinators in their own gardens.

Questions?

Contact Lenny: [ifneedbee10@gmail.com](mailto:ifneedbee10@gmail.com)

[www.scottvillebeekeepers.org](http://www.scottvillebeekeepers.org)

## News

MLCD is currently looking for new employees, please visit our [Employment page](#) for more information. We will be posting new jobs later this month as well, so be sure to check back.



## Farm Field Day

The annual Fall Farm Field Day was held last month with host Aaron Schade. Local producers and Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) participants gathered in a field in Mason County to view a tile placement demonstration by Mr. Schade, and participants were shown how technology is being implemented into today's agricultural methods. The tile plow uses topographic (elevation) maps and GPS information to ensure the pipe is laid at the correct depth and slope. Similar technology is also used along with soil maps and soil sample information in a practice called "variable rate application" for fertilizers or manure. This approach allows the equipment to adjust how much fertilizer is being applied to a field while it is going across the field; only applying minimal amounts in some areas and more in others that are more nutrient deficient. This not only saved on expenses for the farm, it helps to keep excess nutrients out of our waterways!

Participants of the Farm Field Day were treated to dinner and more discussions on soil health, soil sampling, and the advantages of using a no-till drill. Overall 20 people came out and enjoyed a fun and educational night on the farm. This event is hosted annually by MAEAP and the Mason-Lake Conservation District.

## Stream Survey Results

On October 2nd, a team of ten volunteers went to three sites on the Little Manistee River to sample for macroinvertebrates. You might also know macro (able to see with your eyes) invertebrates (animals without a backbone) as insects, snails, crayfish, etc. We ended up having wonderful weather for the afternoon. The rain just missed us and it was the perfect temperature for getting into the cold river.

Our goal was to collect over 60 specimens at each site. We ended up collecting over 800 total insects! Specific species will help determine stream health, and the more diverse the samples, the more likely the stream is healthy. The water quality is scored on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the best, 10 being the worst). The Little Manistee has averaged a score of 3.8 since 2017, this year the sites averaged 3.7. This is a very good rating and we hope to see the same results continued in the future.

### **Thank you to our Volunteers!**

Wayne Anderson

Courtney Carter

Randy & Melinda Dougherty

Joyce Durdel

Abbey Hull

Dani McGarry

Armas & Rose Soorus

Casey Throop

Kathy Winczewski

If you are interested in volunteering for similar opportunities in the future, please reply to this email or call our office!

## Conservation News

### **Beachgrass For Sale**

MLCD is excited to announce we will be selling beachgrass this fall. We are currently accepting orders and will continue to do so until we sell out. Our beachgrass comes in bundles of 100 or 500 culms, harvested from our MDARD registered nurseries. To place an order, visit the [MLCD store](#) online or call (231)757-3707 Ext. 5 today. When placing an order please select a pickup date after October 15<sup>th</sup>. Pick up days are subject to change due to weather or unforeseen circumstances.

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## MAEAP Highlights

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) was created in 1998 by a coalition of farmers, commodity groups, state and federal agencies, and conservations and environmental groups. It is an innovative, proactive, and voluntary program for farms and landowners of all sizes and commodities to minimize agricultural pollution risks. There are currently more than 5,800 verifications across Michigan. Farms can get verified in four different systems that include farmstead, cropping, livestock, and forestry/wetland habitat.

MAEAP also provides great incentives like discounts on insurance through farm bureau, cost sharing on resource improvement projects, and RUP credits. Everything discussed regarding farm or forest operations is 100% confidential under MAEAP. This is guaranteed by state law and is intended to keep communication lines open between producers and Conservation District staff to help address any environmental issues that may arise.

In fiscal year 2021, Mason-Lake and Manistee Counties completed 11 repeat risk assessments, 16 new risk assessments, 8 reverifications, and 11 new verifications in MAEAP with farmers and landowners. This fall, two local producers were recently MAEAP verified. G&D Alpaca (Figure 1) located on Maple Road in Manistee,

Michigan was verified in the Farmstead and Livestock systems. They are open to the public five days a week and have a wonderful place to visit with the whole family. Also recently verified in the Cropping and Livestock Systems with the MAEAP program was T&K Cattle LLC (Figure 2) located in Bear Lake, MI. It is a family farm that grows and sells local beef. We highly encourage everybody to support your local MEAEP verified producers!

## Oak Skeletonizers

Have you noticed small yellowish-green worms seemingly floating in midair? Or have you observed small white spots on your grass, trees, or even your car? These floating worms are actually caterpillars called oak skeletonizers. These native, 5mm long, caterpillars get their name from the oak leaves they leave behind after feeding. Oak skeletonizers feed externally on the lower leaf surface leaving behind what looks like the leaf skeleton. Damage to oak trees largely goes unnoticed, except in times when large outbreaks occur. Even during years when the populations are high, the oak trees generally are left no worse for wear.

What about those white spots on your grass, trees, and cars? Those are the caterpillar's cocoons. At only 3mm long, the cocoon will house the caterpillar until it morphs into its moth form. The moths are fairly unimpressive with dark 7-8mm wide wings and a paler body. These adults emerge in April or May and lay their eggs on the underside of newly emerged oak leaves. In Michigan there are two generations of oak skeletonizers. The caterpillars seen now are the second generation and should only last another week or two before they all form their cocoons. Control of these caterpillars is not necessary under most circumstances and they should be left to their natural life cycles.

## Partner News

### **Invasive Plant ID Day with AFFEW**

Tree-of-heaven, Oriental bittersweet, and Japanese knotweed are just a few of the many invasive plants found growing in Cartier Park in Ludington. NCCISMA has partnered with a local group called [A Few Friends of the Environment of the World](#) (AFFEW) to reduce high priority infestations at this park. AFFEW is an environmentally focused volunteer group based in Ludington. For several years now, they have organized volunteers to pull invasive plants at Cartier Park.

This year, AFFEW held bi-monthly volunteer workdays at Cartier Park from April through September. During these events, volunteers pulled invasive plants such as garlic mustard, Japanese barberry and buckthorn. According to AFFEW Director, Sara Bolan, "Removal and treatment of these invasive plant species is challenging. Fortunately, AFFEW has a dedicated group of volunteers who are committed to tackling this challenge!"

AFFEW is hosting one more event at Cartier Park this year, an Invasive Plant Species Educational Tour, on October 12th at 10 a.m. This tour will be led by local botany expert, Dave Dister. Everyone is welcome to come and learn about the invasive plants at Cartier Park. For more information about this, and other AFFEW events, contact Sara Bolan at [sarab@affew.org](mailto:sarab@affew.org).

### **North Country CISMA Invasive Species Videos**



NCCISMA has published its latest YouTube video, *How to Treat Oriental Bittersweet*. It turns out that a rare, native, species has been popping up in all of the videos! Can you spot it? More videos are in production, and you will not want to miss them. Subscribe to our YouTube channel so you don't miss any future videos!



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