Mission Statement:

To provide assistance in the wise management of soil, water, and related natural resources by offering technical assistance and information.
The Monroe Conservation District Board of Directors would like to express a special thank you to the following:

Environmental Stewardship Division of the Michigan Department of Agriculture
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy
Monroe Cooperative Extension Service
Monroe County Environmental Health
Monroe County Fair Association
Our Customers
USDA Farm Service Agency
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Monroe County Board of Commissioners
Monroe Farm Bureau

Without all of this continued support we would not be able to continue with conservation efforts: Thank you again!

And again to our volunteers, who without your help and dedication we would not be able to continue our mission.

## Annual Meeting Sponsors

- Calder Dairy
- Carleton Farm Supply
- Culligan
- Darling Farms
- GreenStone Farm Credit Services
- Ida Farms Co-Operative Co.
- Intec Engineering Inc.
- Jeff Briggs Farms LLC
- Michael Brown
- Robert L. Zorn INC.
- Secord Farms
- TC Clements
In 2018, the MI Dept. of Ag and Rural Development (MDARD) was awarded a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This 3 year grant is designated for non-point source nutrient reduction to achieve goals outlined in the Michigan Domestic Action Plan. The Monroe Conservation District is the designated grant host and began implementation in early 2019.

Formally known as “Soil Testing to Reduce Agriculture’s Nutrient Delivery in WLEB”, STRAND offers cost share to incentivize the exploration, and hopefully adoption, of new precision nutrient practices that improve both water quality and a farm’s bottom line.

The table below outlines eligible conservation practices and awarded funds to date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation Practice</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Acres Awarded</th>
<th>Dollars Awarded</th>
<th>Dollars Spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grid and zone soil testing</td>
<td>$7/acre</td>
<td>15710</td>
<td>$109,971</td>
<td>$60,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable rate or subsurface nutrient placement (N, P, K)</td>
<td>$10/acre</td>
<td>16179</td>
<td>$161,785</td>
<td>$38,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yield monitor calibration with MSU</td>
<td>$5/acre ($500 cap per crop)</td>
<td>5319</td>
<td>$19,896</td>
<td>$2,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision nutrient placement &amp; yield monitor equipment</td>
<td>50% up to $15K</td>
<td>29322</td>
<td>$221,034</td>
<td>$147,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$512,686</strong></td>
<td><strong>$250,032</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eligibility requirements before payment include:

- Acres must be within the WLEB watershed
- Practices must be new or enhanced from current practices
- Nutrient management review
- MAEAP cropping assessment conducted in the last 3 years

To date, 50 farms throughout Monroe, Lenawee, and Washtenaw counties have been awarded financial assistance. The 2020 signup is still open, although funds are only available for soil testing and yield monitor calibration. Applications are accepted on a first-come, first served basis. If you are interested in adopting some of these practices, please contact the Monroe CD.

## MSU INST. OF AG TECHNOLOGY - MONROE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Submitted by: Taylor Myatt, MAEAP Technician - Monroe & Wayne County

The Agricultural Operations program is having another great year with 23 students currently enrolled. 2019 highlights include another productive year at the MCCC Community Farm, where four students helped to grow 1,500+ pounds of fresh produce for the community. The MCCC Farm also achieved MAEAP Verification and proudly has the sign displayed in the parking area. The process was a great opportunity for students to learn the benefits of verification. Many thanks to our local MEAEP Technicians for their help in the process.

The students are also very active in their Collegiate Farm Bureau Ag Club, hosting a Fall Farm Fest and competing in discussion meets with other students across the state. More events are planned for this Spring, including a “Friends of Ag” acoustic country music concert on April 4th!

The partnership program between the Monroe County Community College and MSU Institute of Agricultural Technology continues to offer great career opportunities for our local students, and will also add a second degree program of Agricultural Business for the Fall 2020 semester. We appreciate your help and support in bringing this agriculture program to our community. Please contact me anytime with your thoughts and questions, or to hear about the opportunities in the program. Andy McCain: mccainan@msu.edu
MAEAP HIGHLIGHTS 2019

Despite a difficult year for Michigan agriculture, Monroe farmers and landowners continued to maintain their reputation as leaders in conservation through participation in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). In the spring, MAEAP achieved the enormous milestone of 5,000 verifications statewide, of which Monroe county has contributed 121. Monroe flew past the 100 verification mark in 2019, putting us in the top 20% of Michigan counties.

In 2019 alone, a total of 40 farms participated in MAEAP, and 19 farmers/landowners achieved 28 MAEAP verifications. A total of 118 tech visits were conducted, including 74 risk assessments. This led to 119 environmental risk reduction practices implemented. Congratulations to the following Monroe farmers and landowners for becoming MAEAP verified in 2019:

◊ Adler Farms (C)
◊ Bryan Reaume (C)
◊ Burkett Farm (C, F, L)
◊ Delmer Cilley (C)
◊ Dobberstein Organic Family Farms (C, F, L)
◊ LaVoy Farms (C, F)
◊ Lievens Bros Farm (C)
◊ Metz Seed Farms (C)
◊ Matthes Tree Farm (C, F)
◊ MCCC Agronomy Farm (C)
◊ Petersburg State Game Area (FWH)
◊ **Pointe Mouillee State Game Area (C, F)
◊ Stadler Farms (C)
◊ Todd Albring Farm (C)
◊ Todd Taylor Farm (C)
◊ Tye Thompson’s Fresh Produce (C)
◊ **Tuckers Farm (C, F)
◊ Vacek’s Farm (C, F)
◊ Wildhaven – (FWH)
** Re-verified farms

In early 2019, the Monroe County Community College Agronomy Farm was MAEAP verified. In August, we were able to host representatives from Senator Debbie Stabenow’s office at the MCCC farm to showcase conservation practices in the Western Lake Erie Basin.

Beyond verifications, your MAEAP technicians and partners are actively involved throughout the year in a variety of ways. In 2019, we sampled 12 wells in the county and conducted nitrate screening on 20 wells. We also attend many county events such as the Monroe County Fair, Earth Day, local Co-op meetings, Monroe Farm Bureau Annual Banquet, River Raisin Institute’s annual Gathering, and others. Keep an eye out for us at more community events in 2020!
2019 MAEAP Phase I Educational Events:
• Cabelas Soil Health Workshop (Jan 17)
• Ida Shop Talk (Jan 26)
• Winter Invasive Species Workshop (Jan 26)
• MSU Southeast Michigan Vegetable Update (Mar 12)
• Monroe Pesticide Review Class (Mar 28)
• Spring Produce Safety Certification Course (Apr 18)
• Mr. Wizard’s Hops Farm and Field Day (Jun 22)
• Grassland Restoration Learnshop (July 13)
• Monroe Farmers Great Lakes Sail (Aug 16)
• MSU Kick Your Soil Health Up a Notch (Aug 26)
• Monroe County Community College Field Day (Sep 4)
• Monroe Pesticide Review Class (Nov 19)

Thank you to all our partners that helped organize and host these events! They include: Bedford Township Parks, Fiat Chrysler Dundee Engine Plant, Green Ribbon Initiative, MSU Extension, Monroe Ag Council, Monroe County Community College, Mr. Wizard’s Hops Farm, and the River Raisin Institute. Sorry if we missed anyone!

All of these efforts by so many of our farmers, landowners, and partners led to the Monroe Conservation District receiving the “Grant Host of the Year Award” from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development at the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts Fall Conference in Bellaire, Michigan. We were humbled to receive this award and wish to pass all recognition to all of you who continue to strive for the highest standards in conservation to protect our land and water. Thank you!

What is MAEAP?

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program is an statewide verification program helping farms of all sizes voluntarily minimize environmental risk. MAEAP provides a means to understand and achieve the highest environmental standards. Benefits include:

- State recognition for environmental leadership in your community
- Affirmative defense under the MI Right to Farm Act and other regulatory assurances
- Access to cost share funding and technical assistance for conservation practices
- Restricted Use Pesticide credits (up to 16)
- Added marketability for commodities
- Peace of mind that your operation is sustainable for future generations

If you would like more information or to start the MAEAP process, please visit the MAEAP website (www.maeap.org) or contact your local MAEAP technicians anytime at 734-241-8540 ext 5.

Brittany Santure
taylor.myatt@macd.org
In 2019, the Monroe Conservation District implemented the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program (CBCW) in Monroe County for the third consecutive year. CBCW is a statewide program aimed at educating boaters about the importance of preventing the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). This is achieved by engaging boaters to participate in a free boat wash where watercrafts are inspected and disinfected upon entering and leaving the launch site to prevent the introduction and movement of AIS. This practice ensures that boaters are aware of and compliant with Michigan laws prohibiting the transport of aquatic organisms. This educational program provides boaters with resources about methods of properly inspecting and disinfecting watercrafts, Michigan laws related to aquatic invasive species and current AIS threats. Three boat wash events are held annually at public launch sites in the Western Lake Erie Basin. This year the Monroe Conservation District partnered with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Huron Clinton Metropark Authority to host boat wash events at Sterling State Park, Bolles Harbor and Lake Erie Metropark. Since 2017, this local program has disinfected 274 boats and directly engaged 689 boaters. We look forward to continuing the program, expanding partnerships and protecting our natural resources one boat at a time!

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FARMERS OF THE GREAT LAKES BAY SAIL 2019

Monroe Conservation District and the River Raisin Institute (RRI) hosted our second annual Great Lakes Sail in August, 2019. Monroe County farmers sailed the Maumee River to Lake Erie to discuss current water quality issues affecting the lake. Thirty participants on the sail discussed land use impacts on water quality, agricultural best management practices to reduce nutrient loading to surface water, and how stormwater and failing septic systems contribute pollutants. They sampled lake substrate to identify benthic organisms, observed macroinvertebrates as good water quality indicators, and analyzed water chemistry to quantify nutrient levels. They also discussed the compounding impacts of aquatic invasive species. Presenters included the RRI, MSU Ext., MAEAP Technicians, and Bay Sail educators. A video highlighting the event can be found on our website (www.monroecd.org/maeap). This event was made possible by the Erb Family Foundation. We are planning to sail again this summer, so don’t miss an opportunity to join us in 2020!
**S.S. LAPOINTE WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT**

Submitted by: Brittany Santure, MAEAP Technician - Monroe & Wayne county

In 2017, local partners produced an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved watershed management plan for the S.S. Lapointe Drain Watershed Improvement Area (SSLWIA). This area includes S.S. Lapointe Drain, Sulphur Creek and Muddy Creek watersheds in Erie, Luna Pier, LaSalle and Ida (partially). The plan contains Phosphorus and E. coli reduction plans which recommend Best Management Practices (BMP’s) to reduce nonpoint source pollution. An analysis of agricultural management practices indicated roughly 46% of cropland has been identified as a priority for the implementation of the following BMP’s in the watershed:

- Enhanced soil sampling (grid/zone)
- Precision fertilizer application (VRT—N or P)
- Reduced tillage
- Cover crops
- Filter strips
- Drainage water management

In fall 2019, the River Raisin Institute was awarded a nonpoint source implementation grant by the MI Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE). This grant provides funding to implement strategies outlined in the watershed management plan aimed at reducing identified water quality impairments. The priorities listed in this watershed management plan will help address the nutrient reduction goals outlined in the MI Domestic Action Plan (DAP). The DAP was produced collaboratively by the MI Dept. of Ag and Rural Development, EGLE, and MI Dept. of Natural Resources to establish statewide guidelines for improving water quality.

Beginning in 2020, roughly $150,000 in cost-share funding will be available to implement recommended agricultural practices in the SSLWIA. This cost-share program will be facilitated by the Monroe Conservation District (MCD). Over the next three years, in collaboration with community partners, the MCD will be hosting local Shoptalk events as well as an annual Great Lakes Sail. The educational opportunities will focus on BMP’s, financial assistance, and updates on water quality issues in the Western Lake Erie Basin.

**MCCC STUDENT AG FARM - COVER CROPS**

Submitted by: Ned Birkey, MSU Ext. Educator Emeritus & Spartan Ag

Cover crops can improve soil structure, reduce hard pan, reduce weed pressure, increase soil organic matter, heal soil compaction and improve nutrient cycling without the use of tillage equipment. Legume cover crops, such as clovers, alfalfa, peas or vetches can provide natural nitrogen fertilizer.

Cover crops have been grown the past two years at the Student Ag Farm at Monroe County Community College. At MCCC last year, cover crops included two replications of: Austrian winter peas, tillage radish, Guardian fall rye, trophy rapeseed, sunflowers, rye + radish, purple top turnip, crimson clover, sun hemp, annual ryegrass, hairy vetch, Thorobred barley, buckwheat and Sudan grass. The 2019 cover crop plot is still there, so farmers can stop by any time now or this summer to view and consider how cover crops may fit in with their operation. The working plan for the Student Ag farm in 2020 includes a new cover crop demonstration plot to further showcase benefits of cover crops. The Monroe Conservation District has a Truax no-till drill available for rent for those wanting to install conservations practices like cover crops and filter strips.
UPCOMING 2020 EVENTS

- Jan - Mar 20: Conservation Plant Fundraiser (order forms available now on MCD website, by mail, or at the office)
- Jan 26: Shop Talk - Nutrient Management
- Feb 4: MSU Southeast MI Vegetable Update
- Mar 7: Tree Care Workshop
- Mar 17: Pesticide Review Course
- Mar 28: Invasive Species Workshop
- Apr 17-18: Tree order pickup
- Jun 18: Native Plant Sale
- Jul 25: Mr. Wizard’s Farm Field Day
- Sep 3: Great Lakes Sail
- TBD: Clean Boats, Clean Waters Boat Washes
- TBD: MCCC Ag Field Day (early September)

Be sure to follow the Monroe Conservation District Facebook page for updated info on all our events and programs throughout the year!

www.facebook.com/monroemicd/

USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Submitted by: Dextrin Dorsey, NRCS District Conservationist

The Monroe field office had a good year regarding conservation planning and contract obligation. We received a total of 97 applications in which 89 contracts (91.75%) were funded. Through EQIP (Environment Quality Incentives Program) and CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) more than 20,000 acres were assessed for resource concerns and environmental opportunities, resulting in more than $693,000 being obligated.

For fiscal year 2020, Monroe field office staff plans to increase the conservation planning acres through greater focus and emphasis on resource concerns in the Western Lake Erie Basin. There are currently 35 applications to be considered for funding. Some of the most common practices include: Nutrient Management, Cover Crops, Grassed Waterways, Grade Stabilization Structures, Forest Management Plan, Grazing Management Plans, and other structural practices.

The Monroe field office also welcomes a new member to the team, Ethan Mancos. Ethan is an experienced and knowledgeable Soil Conservationist and we’re excited to have him join our team. Please see his biography below...

“Growing up I spent a lot of time in the Manistee National Forest experiencing the beauty Michigan has to offer. Hunting and fishing throughout Michigan allowed me to truly appreciate this state’s natural resources. Knowing I wanted to work in the field of natural resources conservation, I attained a degree in crop and soil sciences at MSU and joined NRCS as a Soil Conservationist in Saginaw, MI in 2016. I look forward to working with everyone during my time in Monroe County.” - Ethan Mancos