



MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION of  
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

*Let's grow!*



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MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION of  
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Our Mission:

*To strengthen Conservation Districts through leadership, information, and representation at the state level. We do this by providing outreach and advocacy, educational programming, and business services to help Conservation Districts thrive.*

Healthy Soils = Healthy Water = Healthy Food = Healthy People = Healthy Michigan



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### What are Conservation Districts?

- ❖ Michigan's 75 Conservation Districts (CDs) are your local providers of **natural resource management** services -- much like your local fire, police, health, and school services.
- ❖ We're also your neighbors, helping fellow Michiganders conserve their lands and waterways so our environment can be a cleaner, healthier, economically stronger place to live, work and grow for our community.
- ❖ Formed in response to the 1930s Dust Bowl, Conservation Districts are **local units of government** that utilize state, federal, and private sector resources to solve today's conservation challenges.



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### Our Guiding Philosophy

- ❖ Decisions on conservation issues should be made at the local level, by local people, with technical assistance provided by government-affiliated organizations.
- ❖ Voluntary and non-regulatory. Built on a foundation of trust between District Staff and Farmers/Landowners/Producers.
- ❖ To this end, our CDs work hand-in-hand with local, state, and federal organizations to roll out programs that directly assist and impact the environmental quality of local communities and our beautiful peninsulas.
- ❖ 72% of all land in Michigan is privately owned, without CDs achieving climate or other conservation goals would be difficult!



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### Core and Historic Partners

- ❖ U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- ❖ Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- ❖ Conservation District Employees of Michigan
- ❖ Michigan State University – Extension and Institute of Water Research



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### Other Partners

- ❖ USDA – Farm Service Agency
- ❖ Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- ❖ Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
- ❖ County and Municipal Governments




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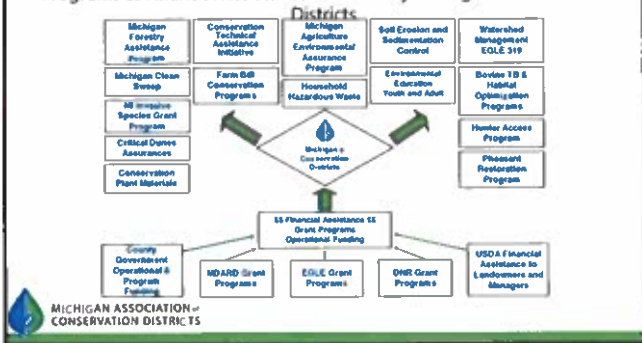
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### Programs & Financial Assistance Provided by Michigan Conservation



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### What does our work look like?

Washtenaw County Conservation District



❖ Technical Assistance – WCCD Staff shows farmers how to use a no-till drill to minimize soil disruption.



❖ Technical Assistance – WCCD Staff shows community members how to properly prune fruit trees to maximize yield during a free pruning workshop.

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### What does our work look like?

Washtenaw County Conservation District



- ◆ Community Education – WCCD staff teach local community members about how some plant species can be used for medical purposes on a "Medical Plan Walk" in 2022



- ◆ MAEAP – This farmer proudly displays his MAEAP verified status sign, which was achieved with assistance from WCCD Staff who implement MAEAP on the ground level.

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### What does our work look like?

Washtenaw County Conservation District



- ◆ MiFarmLink – Connecting the next generation of farmers to land!



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### What does our work look like?

Muskegon Conservation District

- ◆ Technical Assistance – Conservation District Staff designed and helped plant a shoreline erosion prevention project



Before After

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### What does our work look like?

Muskegon Conservation District

◆ Technical Assistance – Conservation District Staff designed and helped plant a streambank stabilization project on the Muskegon River.



Before



After

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### What does our work look like?

Oceana Conservation District



◆ Pictured in their chestnut grove is Karen Kleiner and Corey Allen. The farm, Benona Chestnuts was MAEAP verified in farmstead and cropping in 2019.

◆ A tire collection event where Ocean CD Staff and Volunteers collected over 2,000 used tires for recycling!



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### What does our work look like?

Manistee Conservation District



◆ Pictured here is a tree planting project that received USDA-NRCS cost-share payment upon installation. This property was formerly a blue spruce plantation that is now replaced with over 4,000 native hardwoods.



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**What does our work look like?**

Genesee Conservation District



❖ **Technical Assistance and Cost-Share – The Michigan High Tunnel Initiative brought over \$150,000 into Genesee County / Flint to build 160+ HTs / Hoop Houses, increasing grower capacities and yields**

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**Takeaways from FY22 MDARD Legislative Report**

❖ **For every \$1 invested by State of Michigan into CD Operations, \$4 were leveraged from other sources.**

❖ **The Operations Grants required districts to conduct a biannual audit and submit a board approved budget.**

- ❖ 50 districts submitted a completed fiscal year 2021 audit, and 24 districts submitted a completed fiscal year 2020 audit.
- ❖ 74 districts submitted an annual budget.



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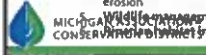
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**Takeaways from FY22 MDARD Legislative Report**

❖ **Districts were required to complete an assessment of their communities to determine local natural resource concerns. CNA results guide districts in identifying priority issues to address through voluntary conservation programs.**

❖ **Results from 74 CNAs were submitted in fiscal year 2022 with over 11,700 individuals participating. Statewide, the top six priorities identified were:**

1. **Water quality improvement:** ground/surface water, aquatic habitat, and stormwater management.
2. **Forest management:** timber, woodland diversity, wildlife habitat, sustainability, and forest health and disease.
3. **Invasive species management:** aquatic, terrestrial, impacts, management, and treatment.
4. **Agriculture management:** farmland preservation, soil health, manure management, and erosion.
5. **Wildlife management:** habitat, preservation, restoration, and biodiversity.
6. **Watershed improvement:** wetland habitat, stream bank restoration, and flood control.



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### Takeaways from FY22 MDARD Legislative Report

❖ **Outreach**

- ❖ A core function of districts is to provide citizens access to natural resource management assistance, education, and referrals to public and private sector professionals. In fiscal year 2022 districts held **1,177 outreach events with 69,270 people participating.**
- ❖ Additionally, district directors and staff attended **1,025 county, township, and other municipality meetings** for collaboration and education on priority resource concerns and conservation programs available to address them.



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### What's on our horizon?

- ❖ Inflation Reduction Act - \$20 Billion to Farm Bill Conservation Title
- ❖ Push for CD Staff to become Conservation Planners to streamline Farm Bill application process
- ❖ Michigan Climate Smart Farm Project
- ❖ Western Lake Erie Basin Farmer Led Group
- ❖ Urban Agriculture and Conservation Programming
- ❖ Statewide Reforestation Program
- ❖ Michigan Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity in Conservation Project



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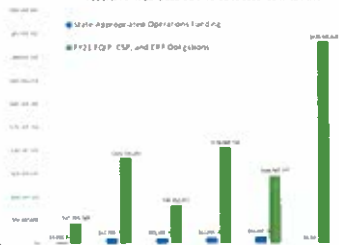
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### Comparison of North Central State Appropriated CD Funding

Comparison of North Central State Funding and Federal Farm Bill Dollars Delivered to Local Conservation Districts



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### Our Current Legislative Ask

- ❖ **\$10 Million** Supplementary to the FY23 "MDARD Conservation Districts Operations Grant"
  - ❖ Current FY23 appropriation = **\$3 million** (\$40,000 per CD)
  - ❖ With supplementary = **\$173,333** total per district for FY23
- ❖ **Renew \$3 Million CD Operations Grant for FY24**, with an **\$11 Million increase** in ongoing funding.

FY24 Total Appropriation = **\$14 Million** (\$189,189 per District)



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### Our Current Legislative Ask

- ❖ **\$10 million** FY23 Supplemental will be used to:
  - ❖ Hire full-time CD Outreach Staff to connect with rural and urban farmers, producers, landowners, and forest owners, who are not already enrolled in these Farm Bill, MAEAP and other conservation programming
  - ❖ Hire full-time CD Conservation Planners to draft conservation plans, the first step in the delivery process for Farm Bill programming. Allowing our CDs to help first time applicants through a complex application process.
  - ❖ Address the lack of capacity to deliver programming to underserved communities. Wayne CD and Macomb CD both are currently very limited in capacity and programming. Genesee CD and Kent CD can help lead them as excellent examples of thriving urban conservation districts.
  - ❖ Establish or expand CD employee benefits to help CDs attract and retain talented, professional staff
  - ❖ Enable CDs to leverage funding from other sources like the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), Regional Conservation Planning Partnerships (RCPP), or private foundations.



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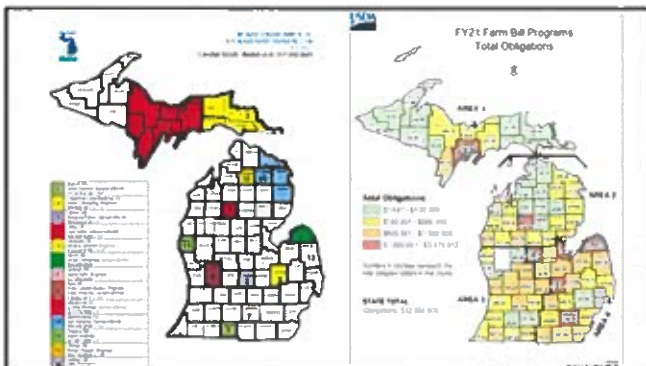
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**Michigan Climate Smart Farm Project (MCSFP)**

- ❖ Provide financial assistance to small scale and underserved producers using practices like cover crops, residue and tillage management, pasture/silvo-pasture establishment, feed management, forest stand improvement, wetland restoration and combustion system improvements.
- ❖ Farmers and producers are positioned to receive a regenerative premium through selling climate-smart products in direct-to-market opportunities like farmers' markets.



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**Michigan Climate Smart Farm Project (MCSFP)**

- ❖ Build on the long-standing Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) to develop a Climate Smart Farm (CSF) pilot program.
- ❖ Focus on accounting for the impact of climate smart agriculture and forestry (CSAF) practices on the small, diversified farms common in Washtenaw, Wayne, Monroe, and Lenawee counties, whose Conservation Districts serve as project partners.



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



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