



Michigan Department of Agriculture

Environmental Stewardship Division

Annual Report 2006

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The Environmental Stewardship Division (ESD) administers the Michigan Department of Agriculture's (MDA) many programs that encourage environmentally sound agricultural practices and prevent agriculture-related pollution. ESD seeks to enhance commercial agriculture activities in Michigan, while protecting the environment and public health.

Environmental Stewardship Division

2006 Annual Report

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Biosolids Land Application Program

The Michigan Department of Agriculture's role in the Michigan Biosolids Program is to provide education and technical assistance to individuals involved with or affected by the land application of biosolids. The law, which is administered by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, allows 182 wastewater treatment facilities in Michigan with land application Program the option to safely recycle biosolids to crop land as a nutrient source. The MDA delivers education and technical assistance by providing a quarterly newsletter, a Q & A brochure, and a weekly information page to Conservation Districts. MDA also partners with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan State University Extension, and the Michigan Water Environment Association to provide education to farmers, wastewater technicians, and township officials. Approximately 93,000 dry tons of biosolids have been applied to over 20,000 acres of Michigan crop land, which equates to \$8.7 million saved by farmers using biosolids instead of commercial fertilizers.

Bovine TB Baiting and Feeding Complaint Response Program

The complaint response program is an integral part of Michigan's Bovine TB eradication effort. Each year, the Department conducts on-site inspections of farms that have been identified as violating the Wildlife Conservation Act, Normal Agricultural Practices. The Normal Agricultural Practices cover three broad areas: feed storage security, hay rack and feed bunk management, and agricultural by-product, culled, and unmarketable commodity management.

The inspections are conducted to determine the presence or absence of wild, free-ranging white tailed deer or elk to agricultural feed, culled, or unmarketable commodities. If it is determined that deer and elk are feeding, a compliance schedule for abatement of the problem is established. The site shall be secured within five days of verification of the complaint.



2006 Accomplishments:

- The MDA conducted 18 inspections in 2006.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program was established in 2000 to help protect Michigan's environment and wildlife. The State of Michigan partners with the federal government, other agencies, private and public conservation organizations and institutions, and farm landowners, to implement conservation practices of great significance to the state and nation, in matters of soil erosion, water quality, and wildlife habitat.

- CREP targets non-point source pollution resulting from crop production; reduces transport of phosphorus, nitrates, and pesticides into soil and ground and surface water; improves stream habitat quality, channel morphology, and biological communities; reduces flood peaks.
- CREP includes agricultural-related acreage in Saginaw Bay, River Raisin, and Lake Macatawa watersheds, covering all or parts of 29 counties.
- CREP objectives include enrolling 80,000 acres into conservation, promoting use of native species, improving habitat and therefore wildlife diversity, and leveraging federal match dollars.
- CREP accomplishments include farmers and landowners enrolling over 65,600 total acres in the program. This includes 36,900 acres of corridor practices or 3,000 miles of 100 foot-wide vegetative filters along streams, 16,900 acres of wetland restoration practices, and 10,900 acres of conservation on highly erodible cropland.



Native and introduced grasses provide excellent habitat (nesting and winter cover, and seed and insect sources) for a variety of wildlife including upland game birds, such as ring-neck pheasants, and songbirds.



Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program

This program preserves agricultural and open space supporting economic diversity and quality of life for current and future needs of citizens of the state. The State enters into agreements with landowners choosing to keep their land in agricultural production. In exchange, the State of Michigan offers the landowner the opportunity to claim a tax credit for the amount by which the property tax exceeds 3.5 % of the landowner's household income. In addition, the state offers exemption from special assessments for sewer, water, lights, and non-farm drainage. The development rights on this 823 acre farm in Shiawassee County (photo right) were donated in 2006 ensuring its continued agricultural productivity.

2006 Accomplishments:

- Forty thousand farmland preservation agreements are currently in place. These agreements protect 3.2 million acres of farmland.
- State purchase and donation of development rights programs has acquired 82 permanent easements covering 18,000 acres,
- Forty-five local open space easements covering 6,000 acres of land have also been registered with the program along with 17 designated open space easements covering 4,000 acres.
- During 2006 the program issued the second request for proposals under the new Local Purchase of Development Rights program. Approximately \$1 million is available during this application cycle. Local communities were required to update land use plans and township farmland preservation ordinances in order to be eligible for funding.



We protect more than 3,320,000 acres of farmland and open space.

“Farm neighbors help each other out. The others sue. That’s a good reason why you don’t want neighbors too close, and that’s a good reason to keep PA 116 in place. Without that, we’re doomed.”

Michigan Farm News “Making Beautiful Music From Farm Life”
Schmidt brothers of Arenac and Bay Counties.

Forestry Assistance Program

The purpose of the Forestry Assistance Program (FAP) is to help Michigan citizens better understand, plan, manage, protect, and utilize their forest resources. Annually there are nearly 200,000 acres of land affected and nearly 30,000 landowners participating in the program.

2006 Accomplishments:

- Conservation District Foresters helped landowners with sound forest management by writing hundreds of management plans, covering 17,000 acres.
- The Foresters were able to assist 2,300 forest landowners on-site, work on-site with 834 urban forest landowners and 298 local units of government with forested lands.
- The Foresters conducted 274 public meetings on forest health issues with 14,500 people attending. Forestry issues were the highlight of 237 newspaper articles, TV or radio spots/ interviews. The Foresters held 367 meetings with public and private foresters to discuss local issues and statewide concerns.
- The Foresters assisted landowners with proper forest management to harvest \$8.4 million of privately owned timber.
- Nine hundred landowners were referred to the private sector covering nearly 23,000 forested acres.



A Conservation District Forester holding a field day, in conjunction with Michigan Tree Farm, providing information on resources available.



Intercounty Drain Program

Staff provides oversight for 1,100 intercounty drains that are established in Michigan and serves as the chair of the drainage board of each. In 2006, the program administered 38 petitioned projects with an estimated combined project cost of \$16.3 million. A total of 415,700 acres were served by these projects affecting 144 miles of drains. Program staff also responded to 117 drain maintenance requests involving 43 counties improving approximately 405 miles of drains serving 1.39 million acres with an estimated cost of \$1.1 million. All project cost is paid from special assessments on private property and public corporations with the assistance of over \$1.4 million in Clean Michigan Initiative, Great Lakes Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control and FEMA grant monies.



Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) develops and promotes a recognized, voluntary and proactive environmental assurance program targeted at Michigan's agriculture industry. MAEAP ensures that producers are using cost-effective pollution prevention practices and are in compliance with applicable environmental regulations and in conformance with Michigan Right to Farm guidelines and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service standards. The program has three systems (Livestock, Farmstead and Cropping) and incorporates farmer education, on-site risk assessments and third party verification.

MAEAP assures farmers have used effective tools for assessing and correcting environmental risks, and can help minimize enforcement penalties.

2006 Accomplishments:

- Almost 1,500 participants in 54 local education sessions
- 550 small- and medium-sized livestock operations at various stages of operational improvements through Progressive Planning
- 347 verified farms
- Over 1,000 conservation practices implemented on small- and medium-sized livestock farms
- Soil loss reduced by almost 600,000 tons on acres evaluated as part of a CNMP
- Completed Cropping System risk assessments for the nursery industry and for orchards and small fruits
- Redesigned MAEAP web site to include all three MAEAP Systems (www.maeap.org)

The manure from over nine million animals was properly used on lands that have been individually inspected to eliminate environmental risk, and saved farms over **\$7,000,000** in phosphorus and almost **\$16,000,000** in nitrogen fertilizer cost, while assuring that excess fertilizer is not used



Michigan Conservation District Program

Created during the “dust bowl” days to deal with catastrophic soil erosion, Michigan’s Conservation Districts now take an ecosystem approach toward the stewardship of our natural resources. In partnership with the Michigan Department of Agriculture’s Environmental Stewardship Division, local Conservation Districts through out the state serve as “gateways”, providing linkages between land managers and providers of conservation services.

In 2006, nearly 215,000 Michigan citizens of all ages came to one of their local 79 Conservation Districts for natural resource assistance and education. Conservation Districts continually scan local needs and work cooperatively with the conservation community to prioritize and solve natural resource problems.

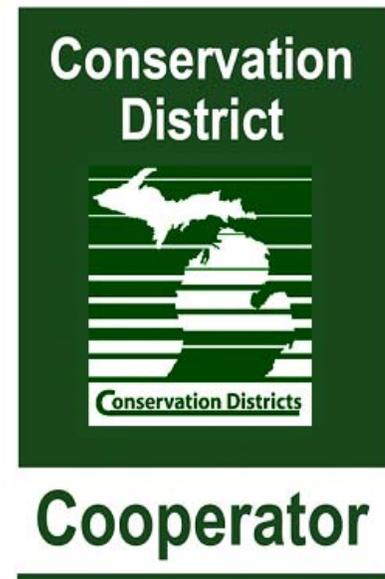
Michigan Conservation Districts leverage an annual MDA grant of \$19,200 to secure additional funding in the form of local, state, and federal grants, donations, and plant sales. Volunteers contributed 46,000 hours to assist districts in many resource areas such as native plant rescue, stream bank clean-up and stabilization, recycling, and tree and shrub sales. Last year over 6 million trees and shrubs were planted in Michigan through the efforts of the Conservation Districts.

Michigan Envirothon

The Michigan Envirothon is a team-based environmental education competition for high school students. The program provides hands-on educational opportunities for students in seven natural resource subjects: aquatic ecology, energy, forestry, soils/geology, sustainable agriculture, wildlife, and an environmental issue that varies each year. The 2006 environmental issue was ‘Water Stewardship in a Changing Climate’.

These educational opportunities are provided by the many organizations supporting the Michigan Envirothon, including the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan’s Conservation Districts, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Michigan Departments of Environmental Quality and Natural Resources, Olivet College, Michigan State University, and others. These partners provide Resource Professionals to conduct training sessions and provide resource materials for Envirothon teams.

In addition to the environmental education/training component, the Michigan Envirothon requires competing teams to conduct a Community Outreach Project. Through the projects, teams address an environmental issue that is impacting their community through hands-on problem solving and community education. The Michigan Envirothon is based on and participates in the Canon Envirothon, North America’s largest high school environmental education competition.



2006 Accomplishments:

- Regional Envirothon competitions were held during March and April in Traverse City, Lapeer, Battle Creek, and Sault Ste. Marie. One hundred forty-five high school students participated in the Regional Envirothon competition events.
- The 2006 Michigan Envirothon State Competition was held May 10-11 at Camp Grayling. One hundred eighteen high school students participated in the competition, while seventy adult volunteers helped to conduct the event activities.
- The Caro High School Envirothon team, the 1st Place team at the Michigan Envirothon State Competition, participated in the Canon Envirothon, which was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Forty-three States and eight Canadian Provinces participated in the event.

Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program

The Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program (MGSP) is a legislatively enabled partnership designed to help individuals reduce the risks of groundwater contamination associated with pesticide and nitrogen fertilizer use. The program is funded through fees assessed on the sale of pesticides and nitrogen fertilizers.

The MGSP effectively addresses groundwater risks through a variety of distinct program areas:

- Agricultural
- Residential (AmeriCorps)
- Golf Courses (Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship)
- Groundwater Monitoring
- Clean Sweep
- Container Recycling
- Spill Response
- Engineering Assistance

Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program Agricultural Program

MGSP Agricultural Program sponsored educational, technical and financial assistance is available locally through Groundwater Technicians and the Groundwater Stewardship Team made up of concerned individuals and decision-makers. Groundwater stewardship practices are in conformance with Michigan Right to Farm guidelines and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service standards, and in compliance with state and federal environmental regulations. The primary means for identifying on-farm environmental risks are the Farm*A*Syst (F*A*S) and Crop*A*Syst (C*A*S) risk assessment tools.



When a Farm*A*Syst is conducted, Groundwater Technicians work with farmers to identify environmental risks, create a plan to eliminate the risks and provide the technical assistance needed to implement the plan. More than 11,000 Farm*A*Syst evaluations have been completed reassuring the public that producers are using environmentally sound practices, and helping to foster positive community and neighbor relations.

Groundwater Technicians offer assistance to develop Farm Emergency Plans, providing farmers a plan to mitigate on-farm emergencies, and for emergency first-responders to know the location of on-farm hazardous materials. Groundwater Technicians also work with farmers to create Emergency Spill Kits, which provide a quick way to contain and clean-up spills of pesticides and fertilizers.

The new cropping assessment system (Crop*A*Syst) helps producers to develop and implement a management plan that prevents contamination of surface water and groundwater during production of commodities in the field.

Groundwater Technicians also provide support for farms to become verified in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) Farmstead System and Cropping System.

2006 Accomplishments:

- 3,999 on-farm risk reductions (pesticide storage security, anti-backflow device installation, drift management plans, triennial water testing, pesticide container triple-rinsing, etc.)
- 428 Farm*A*Systs and 255 Crop*A*Systs completed
- 298 plans written, including waste utilization plans, nutrient management plans, conservation crop rotation plans
- 239 Farm Emergency Plans implemented
- 174 Emergency Spill Kits created

- In 2006 the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program Conservation Technical Assistance Initiative (CTAI) commenced. The program provides funds to ten Conservation Districts in order that they may hire CTAI Specialists to provide information and technical assistance to private landowners to implement conservation practices. These conservation practices are funded through the *Federal Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002*, also known as the 2002 Farm Bill. The CTAI Specialists work directly with USDA-NRCS employees to complete this work. The CTAI Specialists are located in the Alpena, Clinton, Delta, Huron, Isabella, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Missaukee, Ottawa and Van Buren Conservation District offices. The MGSP CTAI is a result of a contribution agreement between the MDA-ESD and USDA-NRCS, with each party contributing \$300,000.
- 217 abandoned wells were decommissioned.

Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program Clean Sweep Program

The proper disposal of unused and unwanted pesticides is the goal of the Clean Sweep Program in Michigan. The Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program, in cooperation with federal, county and local units of government, has established 15 permanent Clean Sweep sites located throughout the state. The program has collected more than 1.3 million pounds of pesticides since 1996.

Michigan residents may dispose of pesticides at any of these Clean Sweep sites, which collect, package for shipping, and properly dispose of at no charge.

2006 Accomplishments:

- Over 125,000 pounds of unwanted or unusable pesticides were collected, including the following active ingredient weights :
 - Over 1,080 pounds of pesticides recently withdrawn from the market by EPA (chlorpyrifos, diazinon)
 - Over 1,600 pounds of triazine herbicides
 - Over 650 pounds of persistent, bioaccumulative toxic pesticides (DDT, Chlordane)
 - Over 500 pounds of pesticides containing arsenic



Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program Engineering Assistance

On October 1, 2005, the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) entered into an Engineering Contribution Agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The agreement funded a program involving five engineering positions through local Conservation Districts and 80% of the MDA Professional Engineer. The goal of the program is to provide assistance to the NRCS for services they have contracted with landowners to provide engineering for Farm Bill Programs.

Five engineers provide service working through Conservation Districts throughout the state. Their duties include design, inventory and evaluation, surveying, pre-construction meetings, construction inspections, and plan review.



53 Agrichemical Containment facilities have been designed and installed.

2006 Accomplishments:

- 117 practices have been installed, including agrichemical containment facilities, waste storage facilities, and watering facilities.
- The contribution made through this program assisted in over \$3,035,430 of federal cost share being spent in Michigan.

Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program Groundwater Monitoring

The Groundwater Monitoring Program samples private wells across the state for general chemistry, pesticides, and volatile organic compounds to meet state and federal program objectives. Well sampling under the program is designed to meet specific information needs. Monitoring is also carried out to help MDA and cooperators develop and share information on risks posed by various pesticide and nitrogen fertilizer use practices.

The Groundwater Monitoring Program supports the U.S. Environmental Protection Act required State Management Plan process by providing data on private drinking water well quality to retain pesticide product registrations where those products can be used without negative impacts on groundwater quality.

The program provides data on nitrate and pesticide concentrations to well users, investigates the nature and extent of pesticide contamination at contaminated sites, coordinates information on potential health impacts from the use of contaminated water supplies, and

provides alternate water supplies including well replacement for private well owners with pesticide levels above public drinking water standards. The monitoring program has screened over 21,500 wells for atrazine and nitrate contamination since 1997. The data has allowed the program to identify several factors in Michigan associated with nitrate contamination, and to alert residents using contaminated water of possible risks. Since tracking the number of pregnant women that live in households represented by the water samples, screening has identified 72 households with pregnant women or infants drinking water with elevated nitrate levels, a known health risk for both.



2006 Accomplishments:

- 266 sample sets from 223 wells were collected. This includes confirmation samples, periodic monitoring on wells known to be contaminated, and envelope monitoring.
- Over 2,100 water samples were screened for atrazine and nitrates. Results are mailed to all participants and include recommendations on dealing with contaminated wells and additional sources of information.

Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program **Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship**

The Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program (MTESP) is dedicated to protecting groundwater and surface water resources by advancing turfgrass management practices, preventing pollution, and increasing regulatory compliance within the golf industry. The program represents a partnership between the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan State University, and the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation.

MTESP staff work with golf course superintendents to conduct golf course site visits that identify environmental risks on the property and develop Environmental Action Plans to address those risks. Golf Courses that have identified and abated all environmental risks on the property become “Certified” courses in the MTESP. There are over 220 golf courses that participate in the MTESP, of which 62 are certified in the MTESP



2006 Accomplishments:

- 9 new golf courses became members in the MTESP
- 4 new golf courses became certified, and 20 golf courses were re-certified in the MTESP
- 11 golf course site visits were conducted (with Environmental Action Plans developed), and 23 golf course update visits were conducted

Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program Pesticide Container Recycling

The Pesticide Container Recycling Program provides a way for agricultural producers and agribusinesses to collect and recycle pesticide containers. Paramount to the pesticide container recycling program is the proper rinsing and cleaning of the containers, which insures that excess pesticides are not introduced into the groundwater. It is this vital element that allows Michigan's collection program to be coordinated through the MGSP. Collecting and recycling properly cleaned pesticide containers conserves valuable landfill space and reduces the need for new material. The plastics collected are recycled and utilized for drain tiles, shipping pallets, fence posts and other low human contact products. Since the inception of the program in 1993, Michigan has recycled over 700,000 pounds of pesticide containers.



2006 Accomplishments:

- 60 commercial agribusinesses and turf chemical distributors served as collection sites; 24 of them served as grind sites.
- 52,354 pounds of plastic pesticide containers were collected, ground into chips and recycled.

Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program Residential Programming (AmeriCorps)

AmeriCorps is a national program in which participants provide community service to strengthen America. AmeriCorps is often referred to as the "domestic Peace Corps" as its members are national volunteers but perform their service within the United States. MGSP AmeriCorps members serve by providing MGSP programming to Michigan residential homeowners and renters, community organizations, and students. The primary means for identifying residential environmental risks are the



Home*A*Syst (H*A*S), Lake*A*Syst (Lake*A*S) and Lawn*A*Syst (Lawn*A*S) groundwater contamination risk reduction tools.

When a Home*A*Syst is conducted, AmeriCorps members work side-by-side with homeowners and renters to identify environmental risks around the home, and create a plan to eliminate the risks. More than 15,500 Home*A*Syst evaluations have been completed since the program began in 1997. Similarly, over 7,000 lakeshore property owners have worked with AmeriCorps Members to identify environmental risks and develop risk abatement plans.

AmeriCorps Members also provide groundwater protection education programming to homeowner groups, realtor associations, volunteers, and K-12 students, providing environmental awareness across a broad spectrum of Michigan citizens.

2006 Accomplishments:

- 2,823 Home*A*Systs, 1,244 Lake*A*Systs, and 834 Lawn*A*Systs were completed
- 1,332 volunteers were recruited and trained
- 22,835 K-12 students received in-class educational programming

Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program Spill Response

The Michigan Groundwater Spill Response Program provides for the rapid, cost-effective clean-up and proper use or disposal of manure, pesticides and fertilizer.

MDA field staff members respond to incidents reported to the MDA Spill Hotline (800-405-0101) by emergency first responders, responsible parties, or other persons that observe an uncontrolled release. MDA field staff work with the responsible party to contain the spill. Once any immediate environmental concerns are abated, the responsible party is provided with advice how to best clean-up the spilled material. In nearly all situations, the spilled material is land applied at agronomic rates, avoiding costly landfill expenses.



Rapid response to farm spills is important to protecting surface and ground water

2006 Accomplishments:

- 17 spills were successfully resolved; 11 involved commercial turf companies, 3 involved private applicators, and 3 involved commercial agri-businesses.

Michigan Right to Farm Program

The Right to Farm (RTF) program is designed to respond to environmental and nuisance complaints in a timely manner, and assist producers with proper siting of new and expanding livestock facilities. The Right to Farm Act provides farmers with nuisance protection if the farm conforms to the Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) that apply to their farm operation. Individuals can express concerns about various farming practices or file a formal complaint for investigation about a farm operation or practice.

When a complaint is filed, program staff responds with an on-site inspection of the farm facility, which is typically conducted within four business days of the complaint. Complaint investigations also include an interview of the complainant to discuss their concerns, report findings, and explain what changes may need to be made at the farm operation.

The program responded to an all time record 164 new environmental complaints and conducted 140 follow up inspections during Fiscal Year 2006. While nearly half of the new complaints were not verified, changes in management practices were necessary for the other half. The management practices implemented on these farms included: 14,700 feet of stream bank protection by installation of fencing, 1,322 animal units (over 1,000 cattle) were excluded from surface water, 21 farms changed their management of runoff to protect sensitive areas, and 41 other farms made changes in how they protect surface water and manage nutrients.



In addition, 18 farms developed and implemented Manure Management System Plans. These plans covered 11,406 animal units and 13,783 acres of crop land. Adherence to the provisions of these plans delivers both pollution prevention and conflict resolution to the environmental conditions described in the complaints.

The RTF site selection process for new and expanding livestock facilities provides the farmers and their surrounding community with environmental assurance, social compatibility

and sustainable farm operations. Forty farms requested site verification and 22 were completed. About two thirds were for expansions of dairy or swine farms, and more than half were for facilities with a total capacity of less than 1,000 animal units



Migrant Labor Housing Program

Michigan's unique environment makes it possible to grow a variety of specialty crops. Thirty-seven commodities, ranging from fruits and vegetables to bedding plants and Christmas trees are labor intensive, hand-harvest dependent, and could not be produced without migrant farm laborers. Migrant Labor Housing is essential to keeping Michigan agriculture viable.

2006 Accomplishments:

- Inspected and licensed 811 housing sites in Michigan.
- Program staff conducted 1,064 inspections for license year 2006.
- A total of 3,926 living units were approved for occupancy, providing a capacity to house 22,485 people.
- U.S. DOL housing construction grants proved to 8 farmers who invested over \$470,000 in improved housing.



Michigan is a destination of choice for migrant laborers

Water Use Reporting and Aquifer Protection Program

Water use reporting requires all agricultural withdraws of quantities greater than 100,000 gallons per day as required by law to report their use to the Michigan Department of Agriculture. Over 1,076 water users reported representing 329,454 acres.

This program responded to one complaint with eight complaintants referred from the Department of Environmental Quality of low capacity residential wells being affected by a high capacity irrigation well. The complaint was not verified.

