GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

DR. TIM BORING
DIRECTOR

NOTICE OF MEETING

MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

May 6, 2026

The regular meeting of the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development will be held on Wednesday, May 20, 2026. The business session is scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m. The meeting is open to the public and this notice is provided under the Open Meetings Act, 1976 PA 267, MCL 15.261 to 15.275. The Commissioners will be meeting at Deborah A. Stabenow Building – Houghton Conference Room, 6th floor South, 525 West Allegan Street, Lansing, Michigan. This meeting is also being conducted electronically to allow for greater remote public attendance and participation. To join the meeting via Microsoft Teams: by telephone dial: **1-248-509-0316** and enter the **Conference ID 174 280 339#** or by video conference visit www.michigan.gov/mdard/about/boards/agcommission to join the day of the meeting.

In accordance with the Commission's Public Appearance Guidelines, individuals wishing to address the Commission may pre-register to do so during the Public Comment period as noted below and will be allowed up to three minutes for their presentation. Documents distributed in conjunction with the meeting will be considered public documents and are subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. The public comment time provides the public an opportunity to speak; the Commission will not necessarily respond to the public comment.

To pre-register to speak virtually during this meeting, individuals should contact the Commission Assistant **no later than Fri. May 15th, 2026,** via email at MDA-Ag-Commission@michigan.gov and provide their name, organization they represent, address, and telephone number, as well as indicate if they wish to speak to an agenda item. The Commission Assistant will respond in acknowledgement of speaking request via email. You may also contact the Commission Assistant at that email address to provide input or ask questions on any business that will come before the Commission at the meeting. The Commission Chair will call upon each person by name and telephone number when it is time for them to speak and there will be a meeting moderator facilitating participation. All others wishing to speak will be provided two minutes to do so. Instructions on how to be recognized will be provided at the beginning of the meeting.

Those needing accommodations for effective participation in the meeting should contact the Commission Assistant at 800-292-3939 one week in advance or may use the Michigan Relay Center by calling 711 for deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired persons.

Tim Boring
Director

MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Deborah A Stabenow Building
Douglas Houghton Conference Room

Option to Join via Remote Technology
Dial: 1-248-509-0316; Conf. ID 174 280 339#

May 20th, 2026
TENTATIVE AGENDA

9:00 a.m.

1. **Call to Order** and **Roll Call**

2. **Approval of Agenda (action item)**

3. **Approval of Minutes** from March 18th, 2026, Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development Meeting **(action item)**

4. **Commissioner Comments and Travel (action item)**

5. **Director's Report**

6. **Public Comment on Agenda Items**
In accordance with the Public Appearance Guidelines in the Commission Policy Manual, individuals wishing to address the Commission must complete a Public Appearance Card and will be allowed up to three minutes for their presentation. Documents distributed at the meeting will be considered public documents and are subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. The public comment time provides the public an opportunity to speak; the Commission will not necessarily respond to the public comment.

7. **Food and Agriculture Investment Fund Requests**: Jamie Zmitko-Somers, Division Director, Agriculture Development Division **(action item)**
    - Project Summary: Chiller Equipment Building Project, fairlife, LLC

8. **Prohibited and Restricted Invasive Species-Addition to NREPA Part 413 (action item)**

9. **Public Comment**
In accordance with the Public Appearance Guidelines in the Commission Policy Manual, individuals wishing to address the Commission will be allowed up to three minutes for their presentation. Documents distributed at the meeting will be considered public documents and are subject to provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. The public comment time provides the public an opportunity to speak; the Commission will not necessarily respond to the public comment.

10. **Adjourn (action item)**

MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Deborah A Stabenow Building
Douglas Houghton Conference Room

Option to Join via Remote Technology
Dial: 1-248-509-0316; Conf. ID 361 914 899#

Meeting Minutes
March 18th, 2026

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CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Williams called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development to order at 9:00 a.m. on March 6, 2026. The Commissioner Assistant called roll with the following Commissioners present:

PRESENT:
David Williams, Vice Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development.
Monica Wyant, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Dr. Felicia Wu, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development
Andy Chae, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development.
Dr. Tim Boring, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

ABSENT/EXCUSED:
Kathrine Garthe, Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development, joined remotely as a non-voting member.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WU MOVED TO EXCUSE CHAIR GARTHE. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 18, 2026, AGENDA. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 5, 2025, MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR NOVEMBER 5, 2025, MEETING. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND TRAVEL

Vice Chair Williams opened comment from the commissioners on any agricultural information or ag-related travel since the last meeting.

Commissioner Chae is starting to work on his farm's nursery, where they are also working on marketing and logistics with a distributor in Eastern Market. The farm is working to finalize their

farm corporation.

Commissioner Wu recently traveled to Washington DC to serve as President for the Society for Risk Analysis, especially associated with agriculture and public health. She also gave a speech on the recent dietary guidelines for American's published earlier this year.

Commissioner Williams attended the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Sustainable Agriculture Roundtable in Indianapolis, the Great Lakes Crop Summit in Mt. Pleasant and the Commodity Classic in San Antonio Texas.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO ADOPT THE COMMISSIONER'S TRAVEL TO TODAY'S MEETING. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

Vice Chair Williams laid the commission at ease, without objection, the Commission stood at ease at the call of the chair at 9:12 a.m.
Vice Chair Williams brought the commission back to order, the time being 9:15 a.m.

Chair Garthe informed the commission that the reason for her absence was the snow was still deep in Northern Michigan after a recent snowstorm.

COMMISSIONER ISSUES

Vice Chair Williams recognized Lexava Smith's years of loyal service to MDARD highlighting her work in the Farmland Preservation Program. Vice Chair Williams thanked Lexia for her service to the state.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WU MOVED TO ADOPT THE RETIREMENT RESOLUTION FOR LEXAVA SMITH. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

Vice-Chair Williams opened the nominations for the following commission officers for 2026: Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WYANT MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER WU AS CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION. COMMISSIONER CHAE SECONDED. SEEING NO OTHER NOMINATIONS, MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER WYANT AS VICE CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION. COMMISSIONER WU SECONDED. SEEING NO OTHER NOMINATIONS, MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER CHAE MOVED TO NOMINATE COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS AS SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. SEEING NO OTHER NOMINATIONS, MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Williams handed the gavel over to newly elected Chair Wu.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Boring shared that he and staff in the department have been traveling attending meetings and conferences that are impactful to growers. These meetings continue to assess and inform

DRAFT

where agriculture stands today with the challenging economic conditions. The Director highlighted the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers-organization that is under Governor Whitmer's leadership which has been executing a sustainable agriculture initiative. This group works together with our partners in the surrounding Great Lakes States, Ontario and Quebec on economic development, environmental protection, and the new pillar of sustainable agriculture.

The Director highlighted the Farm to Family program and noted that the commission would see a presentation later in the meeting. The program recently launched the Good Food for Michigan project with an opportunity to provide food quality and access across the state. This project will be working on addressing institutional procurement barriers in schools, hospitals, and colleges, while making sure that they can break down barriers. If we're feeding people on a local basis, then that food should originate from a local basis.

The Director informed the commission that the department is in the early stages of the budgetary process. The Governor presented her recommended budget several weeks ago and a few high-level initiatives that when adopted would undertake as a department, including the creation of a new program helping beginning farmers. The department has recently presented to the House Appropriations Subcommittee and would be before the Seante Appropriations Subcommittee later in the day.

The Director spoke about the department's commitment to the continued work around local food systems and regenerative agriculture program, which is receiving attention from other states and federal partners. The Director stated that the department is acutely aware of the challenging economic conditions that growers are facing here across the state and will continue to advocate on their behalf.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Matthew Bertrand, representing the Michigan Public Lands, Parks, and Conservation Coalition, testified before the commission.

Dr. Robert Schutzki, representing the Michigan Nursery Industry, testified before the commission.

Davis Harmon, representing the Spring Meadow Nursey, testified before the commission.

Judson LeCompe, representing the Spring Meadow Nursey, testified before the commission.

Kristopher Lentner, representing Artisans Landscape and Design, testified before the commission.

Jerry Somalski, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Audra Hynes testified before the commission.

Andy Todosconk, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Elizabeth Seagull testified before the commission.

Rob Thomas, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Shannon Fischer, representing Harder and Warner, testified before the commission.

Ryan Weesies, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Nate Weaver, representing the Michigan Wood Fibers, testified before the commission.

Evan Rosin, on behalf of the Wayne County Conservation District and on his own behalf, testified before the commission.

Kris Worley, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Elliot Rudert, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

James Begick, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Jerold Coon, representing Coon's Berry Farm, testified before the commission.

Emily Huening, representing the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Amy Upton, on behalf of The Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, testified before the commission.

Marilyn Trent, on her own behalf, testified before the commission.

Carolyn Miller testified before the commission.

Randy Butters, representing the Newago County Environmental Coalition, testified before the commission.

David Putt, on behalf of the Wildflower Association of Michigan, testified before the commission.

Jessie Schulte, representing the West Michigan Conservation Network, testified before the commission.

The following people submitted a card, but did not wish to speak:
David Tork
Andy Krauss
Jessie Romero
Jon Geer
Hugh McGillivray
Keith Johnston
Dan Papineau

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Christian Clark

FARM TO FAMILY PROGRAM UPDATE:

Cheyenne Liberti, Program Manager for the Food to Family Program, presented ~~to the commission~~ an overview of the program, since it was created in 2025. Ms. Liberti highlighted how the program touches on all four priorities of the department and continues to work with farms throughout the state. Based on these priorities they are developing four pillars of priorities in the program, which include: Listening, Funding, Connecting and Coordinating. The Farm to Family Program is working across the state to facilitate these pillars with growers and consumers. The funding grants that have been provided to food hubs and stops around the state, have provided over 100,000 lbs. of produce and animal proteins reaching nearly 2000 state residents.

Commissioner Wyant asked what top opportunities the program has identified. Ms. Liberti said that the program is seeing the needs of small and medium sized farmers. She explained with the hiring of Adam Montri, farmers have an opportunity to have one-on-one coaching business planning between buyer and supplier, which helps keep steady income on the farm. The program is also seeing a need for shared licensed kitchen facilities.

BUDGET UPDATE:

Sylvia Renteria, Director of Finance and Budget, presented the commission with an update from the Executive Recommendation Budget for FY 27-28. Ms. Renteria explained that all investment proposals are from current restricted funds, they are not additional general fund requests. These proposals include a beginner agricultural careers program, qualified forest program, dangerous additives and dietary supplements, Fair Food Network Double Up Food Bucks program, and the Agriculture Equine Industry Development Fund. She also explained the transfer of the Rural Development Fund Board into the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity and the investment of upgrades to the pesticide licensing system, which is housed in the Department of Management, Technology and Budget.

Commissioner Wu asked about the proposals for dangerous additives and dietary supplements, especially with her work with the World Health Organization. Ms. Renteria explained the department is seeing additives marketed to children and younger people that are not regulated and can be found in convenience stores in energy drinks.

GENERALLY ACCEPTED AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (GAAMPS) REVISION OF 2026 FARM MARKET GAAMPS:

Director Boring shared the technical error found in the 2026 Farm Market GAAMPS that removed the word fermenting in the processing definition in the 2026 GAAMP. This revised GAAMP would place the definition back to the original definition from 2025.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS MOVED TO ADOPT THE REVISION TO THE 2026 FARM MARKET GAAMPS. COMMISSIONER WYANT SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

PROHIBITED AND RESTRICTED INVASIVE SPECIES:

Susannah Iott, the Invasive Species Program Specialist, and Katie Grzesiak, an Invasive Species Coordinator at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) gave an overview of recommended regulation request on Invasive Plant Species, as presented at the November meeting.

Director Borings stated that no action would be taken today, however the Director would be reviewing the recommendation, and the department will continue to work with stakeholders on the matter Commissioner Williams asked if the risk assessment recommendation would happen annually. Ms. Iott explained that recommendations would come from risk assessment, as needed based on science and research. Commissioner Chae asked if there were examples of alternatives for the invasive species. Ms. Grzesiak offered boxwood or native honeysuckle as possible replacements for Japanese Barberry.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment

ADJOURN

MOTION: COMMISSIONER WYANT MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:05 A.M.

Attachments:

A) Agenda
B) Agriculture and Rural Development Commission Meeting Minutes November 5th, 2025
C) Retirement Resolution: Lexava Smith
D) Written Public Comments
E) Farm to Family Program Presentation
F) Budget Update Presentation
G) 2026 Farm Market GAAMPs Revision
H) Prohibited and Restricted Invasive Species Presentation
I) Prohibited and Restricted Invasive Species Public Comment

DRAFT

STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER DR. TIM BORING

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

DATE: May 20, 2026

TO: Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development

FROM: Jamie Zmitko-Somers, Director, Agriculture Development Bureau

SUBJECT: Food and Agriculture Investment Program Recommendation – fairlife, LLC

Background

fairlife, LLC is a nutrition company founded in 2012, with production beginning that same year at its Coopersville, Michigan facility. The company produces ultra-filtered milk, Core Power, and Nutrition Plan protein shakes and has grown to nearly 1,000 employees across facilities in Michigan, Arizona, and New York. fairlife is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Coca-Cola Company.

Project Description

fairlife plans a major expansion of its Coopersville facility to meet growing consumer demand. The project includes two new high-speed production lines using the company's patented ultrafiltration technology, adding approximately 320,000 square feet to the plant. The total investment is estimated at $650 million and will create 150 new direct jobs with an average annual wage of $60,000. Construction is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2026, with commercial production targeted for the first quarter of 2028.

As part of the overall investment, the company will construct a $20.65 million chiller-equipment building to support expanded chilled-water infrastructure. The investment includes new water-cooled chillers, cooling towers, electrical upgrades, and an 8,500-square-foot utility building. This building's installation and commissioning is scheduled for completion by September 2026.

Impact on Michigan's Agriculture Industry

The Coopersville facility is fairlife's largest production site, currently employing more than 400 people and sourcing over 6 million pounds of raw milk per day from more than 30 Michigan dairy farms. The expansion is expected to increase milk intake by up to 4 million pounds per day, a more than 60 percent increase. This will create significant new market opportunities for Michigan dairy farmers, strengthen farm revenues, and support long-term farm sustainability. fairlife is a manufacturer of Class I and II products. These are all value-add products that pay farmers a return greater price than regular commodity products like cheese and butter. Also, since they make Class I products, the plant is considered a pool plant. This means the money fairlife pays for milk goes into the Federal Order 33 pool and is shared among all the farmers in the area. The

additional production at the fairlife facility raises the pay price of all farms in the region, even if they never ship a drop of milk to fairlife.

fairlife requires all suppliers to meet environmental standards including a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) to manage nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus from manure, wastewater to protect water quality and meet environmental regulations. They also participate in voluntary programs such as Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) and the National Dairy FARM Environmental Stewardship Program. fairlife's primary Michigan supplier cooperative is part of the U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment, the U.S. dairy's social responsibility pledge to consumers, customers, and other stakeholders. The company has committed to the Muskegon pipeline project to support beneficial reuse of treated effluent for agricultural irrigation. Each year, fairlife also recognizes outstanding environmental innovation among its suppliers through the "*Believe in Better*" Environmental Care award.

Additional Impact
The project will generate substantial economic activity in West Michigan through construction, transportation, logistics, and supply-chain services. The expansion will improve energy efficiency and operational reliability through modern utility systems and increased reuse of water and process byproducts. The project strengthens Michigan's position as a national leader in value-add dairy processing and innovation. fairlife offers a comprehensive benefits package, including a 401(k)-retirement program, along with multiple paid leave and time-off benefits. The benefits package includes paid parental leave, sick time, and vacation/paid planned time off which increases with tenure, paid holidays, and paid bereavement leave. There would be significant investment into the workforce in technical training and development programs, allowing team members personal and professional growth.

MDARD Staff Recommendation
Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development staff recommend the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development approve a Food and Agriculture Investment Fund performance-based grant of $275,000.

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

DR. TIM BORING
DIRECTOR

INVASIVE SPECIES ORDER

Amendment No. 1 of 2026

This action is being taken under authority granted to the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development (MCARD) by the Natural Resources Environmental Protection Act (NREPA), Public Act 451 of 1994, Section 41302, as amended, (MCL 324.41302) which states:

> *The relevant commission shall list a nonaquatic species as a restricted species if … the organism is not native, is naturalized and widely distributed in this state, and … based on a risk assessment has either the potential to harm human health or to severely harm natural, agricultural, or silvicultural resources or effective management or control techniques …are available.*
>
> *The relevant commission shall list an aquatic species as a prohibited species if… the organism is not native, is not naturalized in this state or, if naturalized, is not widely distributed and … based on a risk assessment has either the potential to harm human health or to severely harm natural, agricultural, or silvicultural resources or effective management or control techniques … are not available.*

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) is charged under Part 413 with regulation of invasive plant species, in consultation with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

MDARD has completed Weed Risk Assessments (WRA) as set out by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Plant Protection & Quarantine for each of the species listed below (available on www.Michigan.gov/invasives on each species' page). A WRA involves review of scientific literature to evaluate the likelihood of a plant becoming established and spreading. It also examines the potential impacts the plant may have on the environment, human health, and production systems. This information is used to give rankings of risk and likelihood of being a successful Invasive species in Michigan. The assessment also considers USDA plant hardiness zones, Köppen-Geiger climate classes, precipitation bands, and verified occurrences of the plant to estimate climate suitability in Michigan as well as all North America. The WRA therefore addresses the criteria laid out in NREPA Part 413 for regulation of plant species.

DRAFT

The results of the WRA are as follows:
Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) and water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*) are non-native, have a high risk of being a major invader, have a high potential to cause harm to human health or to severely harm natural, agricultural, or silvicultural resources, a high or likely climate suitability in much of Michigan, and are not widely distributed in Michigan.

Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*), common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), and glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) are non-native, have a high risk of being a major invader, have a high potential to cause harm to human health or to severely harm natural, agricultural, or silvicultural resources, a high or likely climate suitability in much of Michigan, and are distributed in Michigan.

Conclusion and Order

Based on this information, MCARD finds that the following section(s) of the Invasive Species Order shall be amended as follows to include:

Sec. 41301(1)(k): “Prohibited species,” subject to section 41302:

- **Water-hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*)**
- **Water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*)**

Sec. 41301(1)(o): “Restricted species”, subject to section 41302:

- **Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)**
- **Glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*)**
- **Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)**
- **Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)**

For prohibited species, this prohibition will begin 30 days after this order is signed.

For restricted species, sale and cultivation of these species will be allowed in 2026 and 2027. Restriction of these species begins January 1, 2028.

The effective date of this order is _____, __, 2026.

By: _____ Date: _____, __, 2026

Dr. Felicia Wu
Chair

DRAFT

From: MDA-Ag-Commission
To: Lake, Angie (MDARD)
Subject: FW: Six Invasive Species Ban
Date: Monday, May 18, 2026 8:28:42 AM

From: Theresa Farmer <freckles424@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 15, 2026 5:17 PM
To: MDA-Ag-Commission <MDA-Ag-Commission@michigan.gov>
Subject: Six Invasive Species Ban

CAUTION: This is an External email. Please report suspicious emails via the "Report to Abuse" button in Outlook

To Whom it May Concern,

Michigan needs to address the harm caused by the following and restrict the sales starting in January 2028:

- Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)
- callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)
- common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)
- glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*)

As well as immediately prohibit the following:

- Water Hyacinth
- Water Lettuce

These invasive species are wreaking havoc on Michigan's environment and something needs to be done. It's long overdue and very disappointing that Michigan has fallen behind on this issue. Other States (Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Maine, Minnesota, Wisconsin, New York, just to name a few) have already enacted bans.

Now is the time to make positive changes to MI's environment.

Thank you,
Theresa Farmer

Marilyn Trent –Rochester, Michigan

My name is Marilyn Trent. I serve on the Rochester City Council, am a business owner, and founded Rochester Pollinators.

When I learned that plants in my own yard were taking away food sources from the very life force we all depend on, I thought everyone should know this. So I founded Rochester Pollinators, which now has 298 volunteers.

I am here today because this is a solvable problem — and Michigan keeps choosing not to solve it.

I have spoken with only a handful of communities, and the costs are already staggering. Oakland Township spends $100,000 each year to manage invasive species. Rochester Hills spends $50,000. Auburn Hills begins every maintenance season by cutting buckthorn before crews can do anything else. In Rochester, we are working to secure funding to eradicate buckthorn from our 13-acre Dinosaur Hill Nature Preserve in the heart of our city. Rochester Mayor Deborah Jones also supports this ban.

Now multiply those costs across all 83 counties. Michigan has already spent more than $42 million in state grants since 2014 — and that does not include local tax dollars or homeowners' spending on their properties.

We cut them. We pay. They grow back. We pay again. And they are still sold. Every year.

Japanese barberry creates an ideal tick habitat for Lyme disease. Callery pear spreads aggressively into natural areas and crowds out native trees that wildlife depend on. Water hyacinth and water lettuce clog waterways and kill fish — and are still legally sold in Michigan today. We have lost 3 billion birds in North America over the last 40 years. Native bees, butterflies, and moths are declining by 40%. Invasive species are one part of this crisis — and it is the part we can fix right now.

Nurseries have a clear win-win path forward; they just want to sell plants. Native plants and shrubs are a viable solution. Bordine's and other commercial nurseries are already responding to growing consumer demand for native plants. The market is already moving.

Thirteen states — and every state bordering Michigan — have already restricted these plants. We are not being asked to lead. We are being asked to stop being last. The phase-in to 2028 is already a compromise. Please do not extend it.

I am honestly baffled that an entire industry would not want to be part of the life-giving side of plants. Every invasive shrub and tree removes a food source. Native plants feed birds, bees, butterflies, moths — and ultimately us. That is what we are protecting.

Please solve it. You can be heroes for Michigan's ecosystem.

Lake, Angie (MDARD)

From: cathy Kurz <cathy_kurz@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2026 5:30 PM
To: MDA-Ag-Commission
Subject: MI's Invasive Plant Ban

CAUTION: This is an External email. Please report suspicious emails via the "Report to Abuse" button in Outlook

Too much taxpayer money is spent to fight invasive species in MI. Banning the six would save money and protect MI environment and people.

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

Michigan Agriculture Commission

May 20,2026

Statement by Dr. Robert Schutzki

Blanket approval for restricting or prohibiting 6 species and all their respective cultivars and varieties (upwards of 200 plants) by the MI Ag Commission is stating that plant breeders and geneticists and plant scientific research cannot provide a viable solution to the invasive plant problem. That is not the case. Plant Breeders and Scientists are the only groups addressing this problem at its root.

It is easy to make blanket proposals without a comprehensive examination of the current scientific developments in cultivars and varieties as it directly relates to behavior in Michigan ecosystems. It takes a willingness to work with knowledgeable experts, detailed examination of the science and coming together to identify a workable solution.

In December 2025 Plant Breeders, Plant Scientists and members of the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association met for a listening session with MDARD and MDNR staff and presented scientific evidence in support of cultivar/variety exemptions due to polyploidy, sterility and nearly sterile selections of these proposed species.

The USDA Weed Risk Assessments conducted by MDARD and MDNR focused on these six individual plants. Citations of scientific evidence supporting benign cultivar or variety behavior was found in the references on some species and it was unfortunately excluded on other species. This scientific evidence was discounted in the proposed restrictions and prohibitions.

March 2026 Ag Commission meeting, scientific evidence was given to the Commission along with testimonies supporting the exemption of selected cultivars and varieties.

In 2013, DEQ, DNR, Industry, NGOs and University scientists met to achieve a working solution to the Aquatic Invasive species problem. We came to agreement that every plant will be assessed as individuals.

In 2026, there wasn't a working meeting of all those impacted to discuss and achieve a workable solution.

There is agreement that some of the proposed straight species are problematic however select cultivars/varieties are not. Plant behavior needs to be documented in Michigan and plants need to be assessed as individuals.

The Ag Commission has the authority to direct everyone to the table and achieve a workable solution that benefits both agriculture and the environment. I encourage you to follow in the example of 2013 and direct everyone to the table before a decision on these 6 plants is made. The Ag Commission decision is important because it establish precedence on whether current scientific research matters.

Lake, Angie (MDARD)

From: Elizabeth Rose <elizabethclairerose@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2026 9:00 AM
To: MDA-Ag-Commission
Subject: Ban all 6 invasive plants

CAUTION: This is an External email. Please report suspicious emails via the "Report to Abuse" button in Outlook

Dear Agricultural commission,
Please add all six of the proposed species to the invasive species list. These need to be banned from Michigan. They are an intense threat to our ecology, and have the potential to continue to do widespread harm. I have personally witnessed infestations of most of these, especially the non native Japanese barberry and Callery Pear. In Holland Michigan, where I live, Callery pear line some streets. Japanese barberries are in many neighborhood yards. They have escaped cultivation, out compete native species and reduce valuable habitat for Michigan's wildlife. The state slogan "Pure Michigan " should motivate everyone to care about what should be growing in Michigan neighborhood yards, dunes, forests, and prairies: Michigan native flora.These non native species are not only damaging to Michigan forests, dunes, and prairies, but also harbor ticks, thus increasing the risk of diseases. People plant these in their yards after purchasing them from big box stores and garden centers. Michigan native species are a much better choice. Please promote American flora by banning these threats.

Best,
Elizabeth

Elizabeth Claire Rose
visual artist
www.elizabethclairerose.com

David A. Putt (Vice-President, Wildflower Association of Michigan)
72011 Campground Rd.
Bruce, MI 48065
dputt5@yahoo.com

Good Morning Commissioners,

My name is Dave Putt and I am representing the Wildflower Association of Michigan for the 3rd time during these hearings.

Since it is really a moot point that Japanese barberry, callery pear and common and glossy buckthorns are extremely invasive plants, the central issue has become whether or not to believe claims by opponents of this proposal that many cultivars of these species pose no risk to the environment because these cultivars are essentially sterile and should therefore be exempted from regulation.

Once again, I state that the idea of zero fecundity is essentially a myth and that a full species ban and not a cultivar-by-cultivar review is what is needed. In regard to Japanese barberry, that is exactly the action that our neighboring states of Indiana and Ohio and a long list of other states have enacted—a total species ban. Do we deserve anything less here in Michigan?

And there is confusion with the given name of a cultivar being sold at any given nursery. One nursery's Berberis thunbergii v. atropurpurea 'nana' might be another nursery's "Crimson Pigmy" or "Little Beauty" or "Little Favourite"". How does one attempt to regulate all of this? Studies show that one "Crimson Pigmy' barberry plant produces as many as 900 seeds per year. Why are we selling 'Crimson Pigmy' AKA atropurpurea 'nana' in our nurseries here in Michigan?

And what is the scientific basis for stating that cultivars with a fecundity rate of less than 2% are good alternatives to their invasive parent species? There has not been nearly enough field work to substantiate this claim. It's just another myth, not science.

And is selling Callery pear under the cultivar name 'Cleveland Select' somehow giving a consumer a false idea that they are purchasing something better than a 'Bradford Pear' even though we all know that all of the callery pear cultivars hybridize easily with other flowering pears. Our neighboring states of Ohio, Illinois and Minnesota have or are in the process of banning all cultivars of Callery Pear.

Cultivars of glossy buckthorn are being sold under the generic name 'narrow or fine-leaved buckthorn. Studies have shown that these cultivars do produce viable seeds. I do not find this reassuring considering the havoc that buckthorn has wreaked on our natural areas. Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota and Ohio have passed legislation to ban all glossy buckthorn cultivars. Do we deserve less here in Michigan?

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- In conclusion, I believe that assessing hundreds of cultivars individually is not feasible or even warranted.
- Hybridization and confusion with product labeling information undermine cultivar-specific enforcement.
- And finally, exemptions that allow a small percentage of viable seed (such as a 2% threshold) still permit a persistent source of propagules and are a risk for natural areas.

What is needed is a species level ban on all of these species.

Thank you.