



# Clare Conservation District's 2017 Fall Newsletter

“Conserve Water, Conserve Life”

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## A Letter From Your Chairman

Friends,

Another summer has come and gone. Fall is all around us now and it has been a pleasant one. Autumn is my favorite season with beautiful color, bountiful harvest, comfortable temperatures, and a sense of accomplishment.

The District is operating well and continues in its efforts to offer helpful services to the residents of the area. We have filled our District Forester and Soil Erosion Agent/Gypsy Moth Coordinator positions.

Nia Becker is our District Forester and joined our team in the spring. She is a recent graduate of Michigan Tech and is eager to share her knowledge of forestry issues. Nia realizes the challenges residents face with our woodlands and is here to assist you as needed.

Renee Davis is our new Soil Erosion Agent and Gypsy Moth Coordinator. She is a local resident with a biology degree from Central Michigan University. She has hit the ground running and has done a wonderful job meeting the challenges of these positions.

The District is contracted with the county to operate the Soil Erosion and Gypsy Moth Suppression programs. Soil Erosion is mandated by the state and every county in Michigan is required to meet its standards. The Gypsy Moth Program has been with the district for some time. The gypsy moth numbers appear to cycle with weather patterns and other environmental variables.

The District continues to assist landowners with the wise use of our natural resources. We are thankful that hurricanes, flooding, forest fires and earthquakes are not common in Clare County. Take a moment outside and look around at all of Clare County's natural resources. We are fortunate to have this area to live, vacation, and enjoy.

Many thanks to our staff and fellow board members for their continued time and efforts.

Sincerely,

Larry Gross

Chairman

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**Soil Conservationist Technician:** Deann Denton

### District Staff

**District Manager:** Melissa Townsend

**Forester:** Nia Becker

**Soil Erosion/ Gypsy Moth Coordinator:**

Renee Davis

**MAEAP Technician:** Karen Ickes

## Off the Managers Desk:

Greetings,

This year has been busy with several changes. I would like to thank our tree sale customers for supporting the District. Please feel free to call the office and let us know what trees you're interested in or if you are planning on ordering a large quantity . You may contact the Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) office if you are planning on planting hundreds or thousands of trees. There may be financial assistance available.

Another large change is the new Soil Erosions permit application due to higher and improved standards from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The District's staff appreciates your patience with the new applications. We have the new permits available online and are willing to walk you through the application process. Feel free to call the office or stop in.

We have had numerous calls into the office regarding gypsy moths. We appreciate your calls because it assists our Gypsy Moth Egg Mass Counters in locating egg masses efficiently. These counters also make an effort to meet with you when you call in with a concern. If you would like to help us reduce gypsy moth numbers, consider buying environmentally safe gypsy moth traps from our office. They are \$6.36 each and they have been successful in trapping gypsy moths in Clare County.

We are also offering wildflower seed packets for sale to promote pollinators. These seed packets are \$3 each or two seed packets for \$5. Please feel free to stop by the office to learn more about conservation!

Thank you,  
Melissa Townsend  
District Manager

## Cedar River Restoration Project

The Clare and Gladwin Conservation Districts serve on the Cedar River Restoration Project Steering Committee along with several conservation organizations and state and federal agencies. The project's goal is to restore the integrity of the Cedar River and its tributaries to their natural state.

Projects in Clare County include correcting erosion sites, providing for bank stabilization, improving fish passage sites, remedying sedimentation sites for improved spawning, correcting storm water run-off locations and removing a failed dam.

Town hall meetings and public service announcements are being planned for Spring 2018. The committee recognizes the importance of informing property owners of the planned projects and receiving community input. Volunteers are welcome to participate. For additional information, contact the Clare Conservation District (989) 539-6401 or Saginaw RC&D (989) 718-3260. [saginawbay@aol.com](mailto:saginawbay@aol.com).

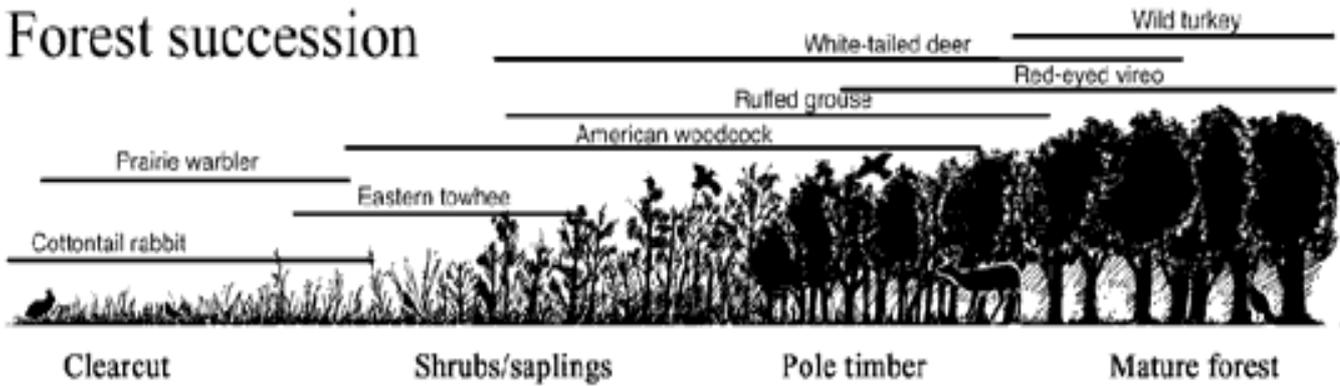
## What Makes a Forest "Healthy?"

One of the biggest questions I get from landowners is "Is my forest healthy?" The answer may depend on what you think the forest should be used for. Do you want a wildlife haven, or are you looking to grow top quality hardwoods? From an ecology standpoint, forest health may be defined as "the resilience, recurrence, persistence of living processes which lead to *sustainable* ecological conditions". In other words, that a healthy forest will stay a forest. From a production standpoint, it may be described as "the production of forest conditions which directly satisfy human needs." According to the paper "Forest Health from Different Perspectives" (T.E. Kolb, M.R. Wagner & W.W. Covington), the four elements of a healthy forest are:

1. *The physical environment, living resources and nutrient cycles that support forest cover.* The physical environment and living resources are a way to describe the earth itself and the life that lives on it. Trees and plants need soil, water and sunshine. Plants also need pollinators to reproduce and some need animals to spread their seeds around.
2. *Resistance to dramatic change in populations of key species that are not accounted for by successional trends.* A healthy forest will be resilient or able to recover from change. While a forest will naturally change as it ages, there are some things that are not a part of the succession process. For example, a healthy forest would be able to adapt to a changing climate. Healthy trees and forests can withstand droughts, floods, increased temperatures or insect attacks. An unhealthy forest may see a drop in long term plant production, decrease in wildlife, or an increase in soil erosion and runoff to waterways.
3. *A working balance between supply and demand of essential resources (water, nutrients, light, growing space).* Balance is an important aspect of forest health. Many people enjoy having deer on their property, but too many can prevent trees from growing back. Over browsing can reduce understory vegetation, or increase undesirable species, such as autumn olive (deer won't eat it). Overpopulation can increase the chances of diseases in the deer herd. Too few deer, and you may get overgrowth of shrubs.
4. *A diversity of succession stages and forest stand structures.* One of the foundations of a healthy forest is diversity in species, ages and size of trees. In our area, oak wilt is a top forest health concern. A pure oak forest is vulnerable to being completely killed by oak wilt. Increasing diversity can help make the forest stronger against this or other diseases. Young and old forests provide different resources to wildlife as well. By having all ages on your property, you provide greater resource diversity.

So what can you, as a landowner, do to promote forest health? Getting a management plan written by a professional forester is the best place to start! Hiring a forester is the best way to know when, how, and if a harvest can help you meet your forest goals. It is also important to stay educated on forestry topics and issues. There are several different organizations you can join to be proactive in forest stewardship. Some of these are The Michigan Forest Association, American Tree Farm System, or MAEAP Forest Wetland Habitat\**A*\*Syst. Our District Forester (Me) is also a great resource if you have any questions about forestry or are interested in more information.

## Forest succession



Succession is the way that a forest or habitat changes over time. Even if a forest seems quiet calm, there really is a lot going on! Your forest may be different than in the past, but that doesn't mean its unhealthy.

By: Nia Becker  
District Forester

## What is Conservation Planning?

Many landowners and agricultural producers have a general idea of what they would like to do with the property that they manage but is that enough? The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a Federal agency that can help you come up with a conservation plan for your property. A conservation plan is developed by first collecting and analyzing data, formulating alternatives to make decisions and finally implementing the plan.

The first step of conservation planning is for the landowner and NRCS to meet to inventory the resources, identify any problems (resource concerns) and determine your objectives. When NRCS meets with you initially we like to do a general walk through of the property to see what present conditions are and if there are any resource concerns that still needs to be addressed. Once NRCS has collected this data we can then start analyzing it in the office.

The next step is to come up with alternatives that can address your objectives and any additional problems that were found while walking the property. This can be a lengthy process at times if the alternatives will include engineering assistance and cost analysis. The goal is to come up with multiple alternatives so that you are able to make an educated decision on what alternative would work best for you.

The final step is implementing the conservation plan on the property to improve it and achieve your objectives. The conservation plan will have everything that you needs to complete and install the practices. NRCS can also work with you to apply for possible cost share funding through Farm Bill programs.

NRCS develops a conservation plan by collecting and analyzing the data, formulating the alternatives and helping you make decisions and implement the plan. By working with the NRCS to develop a conservation plan you will have a well laid out document that will help you achieve your goals on your property. If you are interested in getting assistance you can contact the local NRCS office at (989) 426-9461 ext. 3.

By: Dave Lehnert

## What's New with MAEAP

New Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) verified farms are popping up all over Michigan. An awareness of the importance of protecting our groundwater and reducing other environmental impacts are some reasons why farm owners want to get MAEAP verified. Farm businesses want to ensure their customers that the Ag related products they are purchasing were obtained in an environmentally friendly setting. Verification through MAEAP is completely voluntary and confidential with the option to re-verify in the program every five years. The initial verification and re-verification process provides farm owners the protections and benefits of the program for implementing practices that manage and protect our environment.

MAEAP has recently added another option which includes both farm and non-farm landowners called Forest, Wetland and Habitat verification. This is unique as it combines two programs, MAEAP and the Forestry Assistance Program (FAP), to carry out the requirements of this verification. One requirement is a forest management plan. Landowners who currently participate in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Qualified Forest Program (QFP) may be a step ahead in the process as a forest management plan is most likely already in place. For those who don't, the Conservation District forester will be able to assist you in the development of a plan.

Also on the horizon, MAEAP technicians across the state will be administering new cost-share funds for environmental protection practices on farms to assist in achieving verification. Planning meetings with conservation partners will set the exact value and focus areas to tailor these funds to the area and participant's needs.

By becoming verified in any of the MAEAP Systems (Cropping, Farmstead, Livestock, Forest, Wetland and Habitat) you are playing a positive role in sustaining important natural resources and showing your community that you are a good steward of the environment. If you would like more information about MAEAP, to schedule an initial visit, or to find out more about cost-share, contact your MAEAP Technician:

Karen Ickes  
231-465-8005  
Karen.ickes@macd.org

## Spring Tree Sale Preview

Here is a preview of what we plan to offer in our Spring 2018 Tree Sale. Please call the office at 989.539.6401 if you are interested in a tree or shrub not listed.

White Pine	Black Walnut	Hyslop Crab-apple
Red Pine	White Oak	Stanley Prune
Norway Spruce	Honey Crisp Apple	Cranberry Highbush
White Spruce	Golden Delicious Apple	Butterfly Bush
Blue Spruce	Wolf River Apple	Common Lilac
White Birch	Red Haven Peach	Rose of Sharron
Red Maple	Balton Tart Cherry	Red Osier Dogwood
Sugar Maple	Black Gold Cherry	Silky Dogwood
American Beech	Bartlett Pear	

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# District Newsletter

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