



# CONSERVATION CORNER

*A quarterly publication of the Jackson County Conservation District*

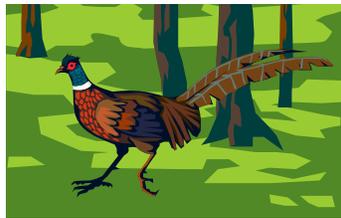
**Winter 2012**

## IT'S TIME FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING!

The 2012 Annual Meeting Banquet for Jackson CD will be held on **Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>** from 5:30-8:30 pm at Gene Davis Banquet Center, 3575 Francis Street in Jackson. Tickets for the banquet will be \$13 for adults and \$7 for children 12 and under, which includes a dinner buffet and live bluegrass music from *The*

*Village Square Acoustics.*

A presentation about the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative (MPRI) and the Hunter Access Program (HAP) will be given by Mike



Parker from the MI Department of Natural Resources. The banquet will also include a brief business meeting and elections for two seats on the Board of Directors.

To RSVP for the Annual Meeting, please contact Lori Fitzgibbons at 517-784-2800 x214 or [lori.fitzgibbons@mi.nacd.net](mailto:lori.fitzgibbons@mi.nacd.net) by January 17<sup>th</sup>.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:	
Resource Assessment Results	2
New Water Stewardship Technician	3
What's Been Going on in the Watershed?	4
"State of the Upper Grand" conference	5
Upcoming Events	7
Office Contact Info.	8

## WINTER SIGN-UP DEADLINES FOR USDA PROGRAMS

The USDA has announced the ranking dates for the On-Farm Energy, Organic and Seasonal High Tunnel conservation initiatives. Farmers must submit a completed application in advance of the specified ranking dates to be eligible for financial assistance under these initiatives. The three initiatives offer technical and financial assistance through the Natural Resources Conservation

Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). NRCS accepts applications for financial assistance on a continuous basis throughout the year.

There will be three ranking periods for the Organic, On-Farm Energy and Seasonal High Tunnel initiatives, all ending on **February 3, March 30** and **June 1, 2012**. NRCS ranks all submitted proposals for

funding consideration. NRCS will notify all applicants of the results of the rankings and begin developing contracts with selected applicants.

### **On-Farm Energy Initiative**

NRCS and producers develop Agricultural Energy Management Plans (AgEMP) or farm energy audits that assess energy consumption on an operation. NRCS then uses audit data to develop

energy conservation recommendations. Each AgEMP has a landscape component that assesses equipment and farming processes and a farm headquarters component that assesses power usage and efficiencies in livestock buildings, grain handling operations, and similar facilities to support the farm operation.

### **Organic Initiative**

NRCS helps certified

*continued on page 3*

## RESULTS ARE IN FROM THE RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

**D**uring August and September of 2011, the Jackson County Conservation District distributed a resource survey to individuals who live in Jackson County. The purpose of this survey was to learn more about what residents think are the most important natural resource issues in our area. The results of the surveys help provide a framework for programs and services offered by JCCD in the future. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) requires all Conservation Districts to complete this Resource Assessment once every five years.

The Resource Assessment survey was distributed as both a hard copy and as a web-based version using Survey Monkey. JCCD received 40 hard copies back and 58 online responses, for a total of 98 completed surveys. Based on the survey results, the top natural resource issues of concern in Jackson County are:

### Land Use Issues

- Agricultural preservation
- Natural areas/open space preservation
- Urban sprawl/development issues; Adequate planning & zoning by local government (tied)

### Water Quality Issues

- Drinking water/source water protection
- Stormwater management
- Lake management/water quality of lakes

### Wildlife and Habitat Issues

- Loss of native habitat/fragmentation
- Overpopulation of wildlife
- Invasive plant species control



There were definite trends among the survey responses that should guide future efforts led by JCCD. Water quality and stormwater management issues are of top concern to Jackson residents, thus JCCD should remain active in these areas and seek additional funding and partnerships to protect water resources. Invasive species control is of great concern to residents as well. JCCD could work with Michigan State University Extension and the Stewardship Network to improve public outreach on these issues. JCCD should also become more involved with Jackson County farmland preservation efforts, as agricultural and natural areas preservation are a high priority for County residents. The full report from the 2011 Resource Assessment is available at [www.jacksoncd.org](http://www.jacksoncd.org).



## NEW MAEAP/WATER STEWARDSHIP TECHNICIAN SERVING JACKSON COUNTY

Sharon Williams began her work in October 2011 as the new MAEAP Technician for Jackson and Calhoun Counties. She received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management from Michigan State University in 1994. Since then, Sharon has served over 10 years at the Calhoun Conservation District, working as a groundwater technician and as a coordinator for the Nottawa Creek Watershed Project. She also spent much of her time working with agricultural producers in the areas of manure and nutrient management under the leadership of Natalie Rector at MSU Extension. Sharon lives on a farm with her husband and children north of Marshall, where they raise beef cattle and 1000 acres of field crops. She brings practical experience to the field and is excited about working with agricultural producers in helping them reach their goals of environmental stewardship.

*Sharon received an award in December from the Michigan Water Stewardship Program for completing her first MAEAP verification this fall.*



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organic growers and producers working to achieve organic certification install conservation practices for organic production. New for fiscal year 2012, applicants will be evaluated continuously during the ranking periods. Applications meeting or exceeding a threshold score may be approved for an EQIP contract before the end of the ranking period. Applications rating below the threshold score will be deferred to the next period. A new threshold score will be established at the beginning of each ranking period. This new scoring process allows organic producers to implement conservation practices in a timely manner.

### Seasonal High Tunnel Pilot Initiative

NRCS helps producers plan and implement high tunnels, steel-framed, polyethylene-covered structures that extend growing seasons in an environmentally safe manner. High tunnel benefits include better plant and soil quality, fewer nutrients and pesticides in the environment, and better air quality due to fewer vehicles being needed to transport crops. More than 4,000 high tunnels have been planned and implemented nationwide through this initiative over the past two years.

For more information about these new initiatives or to complete an application, please contact District Conservationist Andrew Gust at 517-784-2800 Extension 3, or email him at [andrew.gust@mi.usda.gov](mailto:andrew.gust@mi.usda.gov).



## WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN THE WATERSHED?

By Cecilia Govrik, *Watershed Project Manager*

This past fall, local elected officials and watershed partners were invited to participate in a bus tour that highlighted Best Management Practices throughout the Upper Grand. Over 30 people attended the tour that showcased multiple projects, including a bioretention basin (rain garden) that was installed at Russell Park in Leslie and a large wetland site in the Portage River area that was restored under the USDA-NRCS's Wetlands Reserve Program.

The bus tour ended with a stop at Sandhill Crane Vineyards, which has been environmentally-verified under the Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP).



*Brandon Ransom from Jackson County Parks and Paul Rentschler from ASTI Environmental discussed the natural shoreline demonstration project that will be installed on Vandercook Lake in 2012.*



To learn more about the Upper Grand River Watershed and upcoming events, visit [www.uppergrandriver.org](http://www.uppergrandriver.org) or become a friend of the Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance on Facebook!

*Join us for the Upper Grand River Watershed's*

## Winter Stonefly Hunt

**Saturday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**1:00-3:00 pm**

Meet at the Dahlem Center

7117 S. Jackson Rd.

Jackson, MI

Journey out into the Upper Grand River to find winter stoneflies. We will look for these aquatic insects—which are signs of good water quality—at sites throughout the watershed.

Come dressed for the weather. You will be outside for about an hour. Training and equipment is provided. Kids age 12 and up are welcome if accompanied by an adult.

Please RSVP by January 25<sup>th</sup> to Cecilia Govrik at 517-784-2800 x208 or [cecilia.govrik@macd.org](mailto:cecilia.govrik@macd.org).

**\*\* Backup date in case of bad weather is Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012 from 1-3pm \*\***



**SAVE-the-DATE!**

*February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

*9:30 am-3:00 pm*

# The “STATE OF THE UPPER GRAND” Conference

How healthy is the Upper Grand River? What are local organizations doing to protect this resource, and how can you get involved?

The Jackson County Conservation District, Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance, and their partners invite you to learn more about the state of the Upper Grand River Watershed.

**Commonwealth  
Commerce  
Center**

209 E. Washington  
Ave. in downtown  
Jackson, MI

## Session topics will include:

- Grand River Fisheries assessment
- Managing your home’s storm water
- Natural shoreline techniques
- Farmland preservation programs
- Restoring wetlands
- Storm water practices for small businesses

This event is **FREE** and lunch will be provided, but you must be registered in order to attend. Registration forms will be available on [www.uppergrandriver.org](http://www.uppergrandriver.org) in January 2012.

## JCCD SAYS GOODBYE TO DEDICATED DIRECTORS

Dick Ekins joined the JCCD Board in 1985. Dick first became involved with JCCD because of his interest in no-till. During his many years with the District, Ekins has also represented Region 10 on the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts State Council and filled the Secretary/Treasurer role on that Council for several years.

Dick was awarded the “Conservation Farm of the Year” in Jackson County twice, and has led by example by becoming environmentally-verified on his farm under MAEAP. According to Ekins, the best part of being involved with JCCD for so many years was the “chance to communicate with a lot of different people around the state that are conservation-minded” like himself.

*Dick Ekins with the sign he received for becoming MAEAP verified on his farm.*



*Lathe Claflin at an Adopt-A-Stream Bug I.D. Night at Jackson Community College.*

Retired University of Michigan professor, Lathe Claflin, has served on the JCCD Board since 2002 and filled the treasurer position for 6 of those years. Claflin first joined the Board because he saw it as an opportunity to get more involved in land use and water quality issues, expanding on his long-term participation and dedication to other organizations, such as the Michigan Audubon Society. Lathe has volunteered at the tree sales every year and was also an integral member of the grant writing committee for the Upper Grand River Implementation Project.



## SPRING TREE SALE

### Important Reminders

- ◆ Orders will be taken January 17<sup>th</sup> through March 26<sup>th</sup>
- ◆ Tree information and order forms are available at [www.jacksoncd.org](http://www.jacksoncd.org).
- ◆ Order pickup will be April 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>

## JCCD HONORED AT STATEWIDE CONSERVATION DISTRICT CONFERENCE

In early December, JCCD staff and board members attended the Winter Convention for the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts. At this meeting, JCCD received the “2011 Conservation District of the Year” award for Region 10!

Some of JCCD’s accomplishments over that past year that led to this award include working with over 100 volunteers during tree/plant sales and watershed events, educating the community through 13 workshops/presentations, and receiving three grants for new conservation projects in 2012.



*Lori Fitzgibbons accepts the certificate for Region 10 “Conservation District of the Year” from the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts.*

## HAP OFF TO GREAT START IN JACKSON COUNTY



The DNR is partnering with Conservation Districts to benefit Michigan hunters. The Hunter Access Program (HAP) leases land in southern Michigan from landowners and farmers to provide new opportunities to hunters. HAP pays up to \$20/acre for high quality habitat with an additional \$5/acre for land enrolled in a USDA Farm Bill program such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Landowners can select from a variety of hunting options including *all species, youth and apprentice only, deer only, turkey only* or *small game only* (i.e. pheasant, rabbit, squirrel). In order to be eligible for HAP, a parcel must be at least 40 acres in size, 20% of which must be wildlife habitat (forest, wetland or grassland), and capable of providing good opportunities for hunting. Landowners do not have to live on the property or enroll the entire farm. Conservation District staff will place signs to delineate the leased land and safety zones. Working with the District, landowners can set a limit to the number of hunters allowed on the land at one time. Landowners may also choose to have a mandatory check-in or a self-check in for hunters.

State statute provides liability protection to landowners enrolled in HAP. HAP has been successfully providing hunting access to private lands since 1977. Jackson currently has 490 acres enrolled in the program. For more information, please contact the JCCD Administrator, Lori Fitzgibbons, at 517-784-2800 ext. 214 or [lori.fitzgibbons@mi.nacdnet.net](mailto:lori.fitzgibbons@mi.nacdnet.net).



### UPCOMING EVENTS

**JCCD Annual Meeting Banquet**  
 Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
 5:30 pm—8:30 pm  
*Gene Davis Banquet Hall,  
 3575 Francis St.*

**Adopt-A-Stream Stonefly Hunt**  
 Saturday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
 1:00 pm—3:00 pm  
*Dablem Center, 7117 S. Jackson Rd.*

**“State of the Upper Grand”  
 Conference**  
 Saturday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
 9:30 am—3:00 pm  
*Commonwealth Commerce Center, 209  
 E. Washington in downtown Jackson*

**Spring Tree Sale ordering**  
 January 17<sup>th</sup> through March 26<sup>th</sup>



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**YOUR LAND, YOUR WATER, YOUR MICHIGAN.**



*Printed on paper with recycled content.*



***Our office is open 8:00am—4:30 pm, Mon. through Fri.***

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www.jacksoncd.org**

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The Jackson County Conservation District (JCCD) is a locally elected nonpartisan entity of state government, whose purpose is to promote wise land use decisions, based upon the capability of the natural resources of Jackson County, through technical assistance and education.

**JCCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Jim Spink, *Chairman*

Dick Ekins, *Vice-Chairman*

Lathe Claflin, *Treasurer*

Steve Noble, *Secretary*

Don Foster, *Member*

JCCD Board meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 10:00 am at the JCCD office and are open to the public.

*All Jackson County Conservation District programs and services are provided on a nondiscriminatory basis.*