



# NEWAYGO CONSERVATION DISTRICT 2016 ANNUAL REPORT



*"Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt."*

*— John Muir*

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# WHO WE ARE

## Who We Are

### HISTORY

The Newaygo Conservation District was organized in 1949 with the purpose of improving and maintaining soil productivity and for the purpose of obtaining efficient, appropriate and economical use of the land.

Newaygo Conservation District (NCD) is an independent unit of state government which has a philosophy and commitment to the stewardship and conservation of the environment. The NCD consults with landowners to educate them in the planning and use of their land. All programs and services are available without regard to race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, family status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because of all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

### TREE NURSERY

In 1950 the Nursery was started. The land on which the Nursery is located was leased from the Henning family. After Ed Henning passed away Vera Henning continued the life lease of \$2,000 annually. This lease ended with the passing of Vera Henning in December of 1999 when the ownership was then transferred to the Newaygo Conservation District

Currently the District sells bare-root seedlings. Annually, approximately 1 to 2.5 million trees (conifers, hardwoods, small trees and shrubs) are sold to Conservation Districts throughout the State of Michigan as well as local residents. Trees grown at our Nursery are native to Michigan.

### LOOKING AHEAD

Many exciting changes are happening in the Newaygo Conservation District.

# OUR STAFF

## Our Staff

### GOOD-BYE GAIL!

Gail Warnement, the District's Executive Director for more than 15 years, retired in September. Over those 15 years Gail was dedicated to the function of the District and helping Newaygo County residents. Now that she's retired there will be more time for her to spend with her daughter and grandchildren.



### LUCAS COTTON – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR / MAEAP TECHNICIAN



Lucas (Luke) took over as Executive Director along with keeping his position as MAEAP Technician. Luke grew up on a small farm on Diamond Lake north of White Cloud. He went to Grand Valley State University and received a Bachelors in Natural Resource Management. He then returned to the area and now lives in Fremont with his wife Christine and three children.

### LOUISE TOWER – NURSERY MANAGER

Louise has been with the NCD Nursery for over ten years. She grew up in the Grant area on a muck farm where she draws most of her nursery related experience. Since she loves the outdoors, in her spare time she grows and takes care of shrubs and flowers at home. After her daughter was born, she came to work at the nursery as a weeder. Louise then became the nursery manager in 2004. Louise has two children and two grandsons, who live in the Grant area. where you put things about Louise

### ROSA ORTIZ-COUCKE – ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Rosa graduated from Miguel de Cervantes Bayamon Puerto Rico, attended Central University, Puerto Rico, and Muskegon Community College, Muskegon MI. She grew up on a farm in the small town of Comerio in Puerto Rico, and currently lives in Fremont with her husband Ray, son Josh and grandson Gabe. She enjoys working in her position because it gives her the opportunity to work with agricultural areas and environment services that are essential within our county. This is of great interest to her and she enjoys giving back to the community.



## OUR STAFF

### AUBRI SPENSKI – FOOD SAFETY TECHNICIAN



Aubri graduated from Grand Valley State University in 2014 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resource Management. Aubri has worked with the U.S. Forest Service, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and most recently with the Ottawa Conservation District as their Invasive Species Outreach Coordinator. Most of her experience has been with invasive plants, but she also has a strong background in outreach and interacting with the public, which gives her a solid foundation as the Food Safety Technician.

### MICHAEL PALING – DISTRICT FORESTER

Last June the Forestry Assistance Program for Oceana, Newaygo, and Muskegon Counties was hired Michael Paling as the new forester. He had just graduated from Michigan Tech with a bachelor's degree in Forestry one month prior to accepting the position. He has been interested in natural resources since early high school. Growing up in Sanilac county in eastern Michigan, he became interested in forestry by being involved with Boy Scouts and the FFA. After high school, he went straight into the forestry program at Michigan tech and graduated in four years. In his free time, he can mostly be found playing his guitar, singing, playing hockey, and occasionally fishing. Paling says "After running the Forestry Assistance Program for nine months, I am starting to get used to things and know how to better help landowners meet their goals and objectives." He is excited to see that his work has started paying off and landowners are satisfied with the help that they've been receiving.



# OUR STAFF

## NRCS STAFF

The Fremont NRCS office works with a wide variety of landowners from, livestock operations, cropping systems to small scale vegetable producers, bee keepers, forestland owners and everyone in between.

### KELLY BISHOP – DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST



Kelly Bishop has worked for USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for almost 29 years. She has worked in several counties in the great state of Michigan, mostly along the lakeshore. She came to the Fremont Service Center in 2000 where she serves the residents of Newaygo and Muskegon counties – providing free onsite technical assistance to private landowners interested in conserving and enhancing the natural resources on their property. She has lived/worked in Michigan all her life. She has a degree in Natural Resources Management from GVSU with an emphasis in soils.

### JOSE RODRIGUEZ – SOIL CONSERVATIONIST

José Rodríguez is the Soil Conservationist for Newaygo and Muskegon counties for the NRCS. He studied Agronomy at the University of Puerto Rico and moved to Michigan in September 2016 to work for USDA. This is his second tour in Michigan, his first one was in 2015 in Hillsdale, MI. He likes working in the great outdoors and is looking forward to working with the Newaygo Co. producers.

### DAN DEVOS – SOIL CONSERVATIONIST TECHNICIAN

Dan DeVos is the Newaygo County NRCS Soil Conservationist Technician. He assists soil and district conservationists in resource management system plans and provides assistance in conservation planning. Dan is also responsible for surveying, designing, engineering plan preparation, and construction inspection.

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## Board of Directors

### FRED FOLKEMA – CHAIRMAN

Fred was raised all his life in Newaygo County. He and his sons own and operate the family farm in Ensley Center that Fred was raised on. The family farm raises crops and beef. Upon completion of High School, Fred enlisted in the Army during the Vietnam Conflict and worked as Military Police. He married Faye in 1970 and has four children: two boys and two girls. Fred currently has 14 grandchildren. Fred has been a Director for the Newaygo Conservation district since 2003 and has been Chairman for several years.

### KRIS CARLSON - SECRETARY

Kris is a 1981 graduate of Newaygo High School and attended Hope College and Grand Valley, for one year each. She married Max Carlson in 1982 and started dairy farming with 40 cows. They currently own a crop farm and dairy farm with 1400 cows. Kris has four children - Laura, Erin, Lisa and Matthew - and four grandchildren. Kris enjoys the Fremont Soccer Club and coaching. She is a 4H Club leader and a Children's Church leader at River Valley Christian Church, and currently attends the Holton United Methodist Church.

### DAN BRINK - DIRECTOR

Dan is a graduate of Calvin College and, also attended Ferris State University for Heavy Equipment Mechanics. He works on the family vegetable farm where he grew up, east of Grant in the Rice Lake Marsh. The farm grows onions and potatoes on the land with other area growers. Dan has served on the Newaygo Farm Bureau board and now serves on the Newaygo Conservation District Board. He is married to Jewel Brink and they have two children Luke and Emma who are attending West Michigan Christian High School.

### NED HUGHES - TREASURER

Ned is a retired health care chief executive officer with 35+ years' experience in the health care sector. He has a Bachelor's degree in management and marketing from the University of Cincinnati, and a Masters' Degree in Health and Hospital Administration from Xavier University. He is a Life Fellow in the American College of Health Care Executives (ACHE). Ned served as Chairman of the Board of the Michigan Center for Rural Health, Past Chairman of the Michigan Rural Health Association, and Past Chairman of the Board of United Way of Newaygo County. He has served on the MHA Council on Small and Rural Hospitals chairing the Council twice, and served six (6) years on the Michigan Health and Hospital Association Board and Executive Committee. He has lived in Newaygo County since 1985, is past chairman of the Newaygo County Economic Development Office where he has been a director since 2005. He also chairs the Newaygo County Community Collaborative (NC3) and has been on the Newaygo Conservation Board since April of 2012.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### DANIEL SHUE – VICE CHAIRMAN

He is the son of Arvid and Beverly Shue, and husband of Mary Shue Jo for 31 years. He is the father of Joshua, Nicole (Scott) Force, Emily and Katelyn and grandfather of Merrick. Dan is a 1983 graduate of Fremont High School and completed a Horticulture course at the Newaygo County Technology Center from 1081-1983. He was a co-op student at the Newaygo Soil Conservation Nursery in 1983 and was co-owner of Shue Nursery Products from 1983-1998. Since 1998, Dan has been the head of housekeeping with operations and maintenance support and customer service at Michigan Agricultural Commodities in Newaygo, Michigan. For the past five years, he has served on the Newaygo County Agricultural Fair Swine Committee and now serves on the Fair Board.

# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2016

## Highlights of 2016

### NEW STAFF

Both NRCS and the District received new employees in 2016. In total there are four; two new staff, Rosa and Aubri, were added to the District and two staff, Jose and Dan, were added to NRCS. These new staff members will bring in fresh new ideas and perspectives to the District and NRCS.

### FORESTRY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (FAP)

Michigan's Forestry Assistance Program exists to increase active management on non-industrial private forestland. Conservation district foresters help Michigan citizens better understand, plan, manage, protect and utilize their forest resources.

A survey conducted by Michigan State University concludes that only 20% of the 11 million acres of private forestland is actively managed. The Forestry Assistance Program works to increase the number of acres managed under a sustainable forest management plan.

The Forestry Assistance Program has been active in Oceana, Newaygo, and Muskegon counties for three and a half years. In the past year, 74 landowners received forestry assistance accounting for more than 3,500 acres.

The Qualified Forest Program continues to be the driving force for forest owners pursuing management plans and sustainable timber harvests. In 2016, 13 new landowners enrolled into the program ensuring that over 3,000 acres are being sustainably managed. Landowners who are enrolled into the Qualified Forest Program, and work with a qualified forester to develop a forest management plan for their property, qualify for up to a 16 mil property tax reduction.

Along with assisting landowners, the Forestry Assistance Program is also responsible for hosting outreach and educational events within the tri-county area. In the past year, the district forester coordinated six programs relating to forest health, pests and diseases, timber and wildlife habitat management, and tree identification.

Another important role of the Forestry Assistance Program over the last few years has been monitoring the threat of forest pests and diseases. We are working with other professionals in the state to closely monitor the spread of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (a small white wax covered insect that affects hemlock trees) and Oak Wilt (a disease killing isolated stands of red oaks). Although not documented in Michigan, we are also on the lookout for the Asian Longhorn Beetle which has affected maple trees in neighboring states. Your local conservation district forester can provide information and resources on the early detection, prevention, and treatment of forest pests and diseases.

Please contact District Forester Michael Paling who can help you reach the next step in assessing your property, meeting your forest management objectives, and applying for cost-share programs. You can reach him at (231) 861-5600 or michael.paling@macd.org.

# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2016

## MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSURANCE PROGRAM

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) is a proactive program that helps farms minimize agricultural pollution risks. The MAEAP Program is a three-phase program: Education, On Farm Risk Assessment, and Third Party Verification. Once a farm has completed all three phases they are eligible for a sign recognizing their achievements and their outstanding environmental stewardship.

The program's four systems — Farmstead, Cropping, Livestock and the newly developed Forest, Wetlands and Habitats System — each examine different aspects of the farm. After becoming MAEAP verified, a farm can display a MAEAP sign signifying that MAEAP partners recognize the farm is environmentally assured.

Over the past year verifications have continued as more farmers become interested and/or made aware of the program. Our MAEAP Technician services both Newwaygo and Muskegon Districts.

Please contact Luke Cotton, our MAEAP Technician, if you would like more information on the program or if you'd like to get your property verified. You can reach him a (231) 225-3185 or by email at [lucas.cotton@mi.nacdnet.net](mailto:lucas.cotton@mi.nacdnet.net)

## FOOD SAFETY

In 2016 the Newwaygo Conservation District received a new grant from MDARD to help producers adjust to the new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) regulations going into effect.

Through that grant funding the District was able to hire a full-time Food Safety Technician, Aubri Spenski. She began her training in 2016 and she will be serving Newwaygo, Mason, Lake, Osceola, Oceana, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Kent, and parts of Ottawa, counties.

If you have any questions about Food Safety as it pertains to produce, feel free to contact her at (231) 924-2060 ext. 5 or [aubri.spenski@macd.org](mailto:aubri.spenski@macd.org)

## COMING UP IN 2017

### Coming up in 2017

#### MICHIGAN SAFE FOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

The Michigan Safe Food Risk Assessment(SFRA) is a grant and program that will be instituted in the new year by the Food Safety Technician. The SFRA is designed for small to medium sized produce farmers to begin looking at the food safety practices and receive recognition for taking the first steps towards safe food. Aubri, the Food Safety Technician will begin doing the assessments for any producer in Newaygo County or the counties touching it. The whole thing is free and confidential.

#### RIVER COUNTRY LAND AND WATER

Various Newaygo County organizations have joined together to promote interest in the counties natural resources. Groups involved include the NCD, Muskegon River Watershed Assembly, MSU Extension, Newaygo Invasive Plant Project, NRCS and Newaygo County Parks. Several events have been organized throughout 2017 to provide information and involvement in many different areas including plants, hiking, and bird house building. Keep an eye out on the NCD website for events and details.

#### TREE AND PLANT SALES

The Newaygo Conservation District Nursery provides our district, and almost every district in the state, with trees for resale. This year is no exception and stock was already very limited for the Spring 2017 Sale at the end of 2016. In addition to trees, the NCD will also be hosting a Native Plant sale that will include many varieties of wildflowers, grasses, and ferns native to Michigan. The plants are provided for resale by Vern Stephens of Designs by Nature who comes all the way from Laingsburg, Michigan to assist us. This year's sale will be Friday, June 9.

# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## Financial Statements

FY16 Financial Statements

REVENUE	
State Funds	\$ 65,6750.00
Contributions from Local Units	\$ 36,737.00
Interest and Rentals	\$ 61,926.14
Tree and Plant Sales	\$ 195,936.46
Other Revenue	\$ 13,602.95
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 373,952.55</b>
EXPENDITURES	
Operations	\$ 86,573.62
Tree and Plant Sales	\$ 157,019.14
MAEAP	\$ 57,703.57
Kropscott Farm	\$ 66,903.33
Misc & Capital Outlay	\$ 15,859.81
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 384,061.47</b>
<b>BUDGET BALANCE</b>	<b>\$ (10,108.92)</b>

## Newaygo Conservation District

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*Newaygo Conservation District is an equal opportunity employer, provider and lender.*