

Conservation Notes

USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service - Michigan



Spring 2011

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New Lothrop Wins Michigan Envirothon



A team of students from New Lothrop High School finished first at the 2011 Michigan Envirothon held at the Fort Custer Training Center near Battle Creek. Pictured above are: Back Row Left to Right: Josh Reinhart, Brandon Mann, Eric Milks, Front Row L-R: Jonathan Knieper, Mitch Delemeester, Jacob Emmendorfer.

Photo provided by Roger Howell

A team of students from New Lothrop High School won the Michigan Envirothon state competition held May 12 and 13 at the Fort Custer Training Center in Augusta. The team will now represent Michigan at the North American Canon Envirothon held this year in New Brunswick, Canada in July.

The New Lothrop team finished first among 23 teams from across the state that competed against each other on their knowledge and skills of conservation topics. Finishing second

in the competition was a team from Iron Mountain/Kingsford High School followed by a team from Branch Area Careers Center in Coldwater.

In addition to representing Michigan at the Canon North American Envirothon at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, each first-place team member received a \$2,500 scholarship to Michigan State University. The winning team members include Jacob Emmendorfer, Mitchell Delemeester,

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NRCS-Michigan
State Office
3001 Coolidge Road, Suite 250
East Lansing, Michigan 48823
Phone (517) 324-5270
www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov

Message from the Acting State Conservationist

Assistant State Conservationist Brian MacMaster is acting state conservationist while Garry Lee serves on a detail in Washington, D.C..

This is the time of year when the importance of the work done by NRCS and local conservation districts is most apparent.

Spring floods are occurring all over the country and in some areas are the most severe in recent history. These floods disrupt agricultural operations and severely impact the lives of people whose homes and businesses are damaged or destroyed. There is also an environmental impact when the sediment and fertilizers the water contains are carried to the Gulf of Mexico and other waters.

Floods will always occur in the spring but they would likely be less severe if so many of our nation's wetlands had not been drained or filled in. We need to get the message out that wetlands benefit everyone, not just ducks and geese.

Spring is also when agricultural lands are most vulnerable to erosion. A recent report from the USDA estimated annual soil losses at barely more than the acceptable rate of 5 tons per acre. However, recent news articles cited an Iowa State University study that finds that parts of that state have experienced erosion of 12 times the tolerable level. Michigan has not experienced any extreme precipitation events in 2011 but it is not difficult to find signs of soil erosion after spring rains on our agricultural lands. There is still work to be done to encourage landowners to adopt conservation measures to limit soil loss at this time of year.



If you do not live in the northern lower peninsula you may not be aware of a new NRCS initiative to help stop the spread of bovine tuberculosis. At the end of April NRCS-Michigan announced the availability of \$500,000 in EQIP funding for practices to protect livestock from contracting bovine TB. The

assistance is available to livestock producers in Alcona, Alpena, Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet, Montmorency, Presque Isle, Oscoda and Otsego counties. The sign-up lasts until the end of May.



Acting State Conservationist
Brian MacMaster

Finally, this newsletter includes an announcement for the "Show How You Care" video contest sponsored by NRCS and Michigan Farm Bureau. The contest allows Michigan farmers to demonstrate how they protect our state's natural resources through a short video.

The videos will be posted on Youtube and the public will be able to vote for their favorite. Michigan Farm Bureau is offering prizes for the top videos. Please promote the contest in your counties and be sure to check out the videos online.

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New Lothrop Team to Represent Michigan at Canon Envirothon

Eric Milks, Jonathan Knieper, Brandon Mann and Joshua Reinhart.

During the competition at Fort Custer, teams were tested in an outdoors, hands-on setting on seven conservation topics including aquatic ecology, energy, forestry, soils/geology, agriculture, wildlife and salt and freshwater estuaries. Each team also completed a community outreach project prior to the competition that addressed a natural resources concern in their community.

The team from New Lothrop, whose team took the name of their school mascot, the Hornets, focused on the sound scientific management of a school-owned woodlot for their community outreach project. In particular they educated their community on forestry best management practices through selective harvesting demonstrations.

Students on the winning team are members of the New Lothrop Ecology Club. The team was coached by ecology club advisor Ernie Delemeester and Robert Oneal. The team received support and training from the Shiawassee and Saginaw conservation districts, local NRCS professionals, members of The Friends of the Shiawassee River and Devries Nature Conservancy, The Pepsi Corporation and Kohl's Department Stores.

Michigan Envirothon is a non-profit entity administered by the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts. High school students from anywhere in Michigan are eligible to compete. For more information about Michigan Envirothon go to www.michiganenvirothon.org or call the Michigan Envirothon coordinator at (517) 930-7449.



Top - Students take measurements as part of the forestry component of the Michigan Envirothon state competition held on May 12 and 13 at the Fort Custer Training Center near Battle Creek. Above - Students examined soils as part of the soils and geology portion of the competition.

- Photos provided by Roger Howell

Dake Tree Farm Sticks with Plan

The decision to grow trees instead of hay and grain on her family's farm hasn't made her rich but it has paid out over time, said Ruth Dake.

Dake's farm near Newberry has been in her family since 1879 after her great grandfather came from Canada. President Cleveland gave land grants of 160 acres to entice immigrants from Canada to settle the land, said Dake. Since that time the farm grew to 360 acres.

She inherited the land when she was 21 years-old. Dake and her husband Paul moved onto the farm after he left his job working on Great Lakes freighters to work at the state hospital. The Dakes hoped to supplement their income by farming the land. However, they found that farming the land was not profitable and the fields were becoming badly eroded. Through various conservation programs they began planting stands of red pines on their idle fields.

In 1955 the Dakes planted 90 acres of red pines through the USDA's Soil Bank Program, a predecessor to the Conservation Reserve Program. They developed their first forest management plan with assistance from the Soil Conservation Service. Over the years they participated in other state and federal programs to plant additional acres.

The Dakes have 10 children and they thought that harvesting the trees would help pay for their college educations, said Dake.

They held their first managed harvest in 1984 that brought in about \$1,500, Dake said. The trees from the first harvest were used for pulp. There have been subsequent harvests of red pines every 7 to 10 years.

"Every 10 years you might get \$10,000. It's not something you're going to die rich from," said Dake.

The fourth thinning of a stand of red pines planted in 1955 was recently completed. There will be



Ruth Dake (above) and her late husband Paul converted their family farm to a tree farm in the 1950s. A thinning of red pines on 39 acres of the Dake tree farm was recently completed (below). The harvest was the fourth thinning of a stand of red pines planted in 1955.



one more thinning done before a final harvest in around 2025, said Gerald Grossman of Grossman Forestry in Newberry. The last harvest was a 39-acre thinning that yielded 422 cords of wood for pulp and lumber.

With each successive thinning the trees are more valuable, said Grossman. The thinning just completed brought in substantially more than the \$1,500 from the first thinning. The next thinning

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NRCS & Michigan Farm Bureau Sponsoring Video Contest

Michigan farmers are invited to share their concern for conservation through video in a contest sponsored by NRCS and Michigan Farm Bureau.



Farmers can enter the "Show How You Care" video contest by posting their videos online by Sept. 2, 2011. The purpose of the videos is for farmers to show how they protect our natural resources while providing us with the food we need.

A panel of judges will select the best video with the winning contestant awarded \$500. Second and third place winners will be awarded \$250 and \$125 respectively. The prizes are provided by Michigan Farm Bureau. The videos can be a maximum of four minutes long.

Contestants must include at least one of four themes in their videos including: protecting the environment, committed to growing safe food, compassion for animals, and dedicated to Michigan's future.

Only Michigan residents are eligible for the contest. Minors who submit videos must

complete a parental permission form.

The public is invited to view the videos and vote for their favorites. The videos can be seen on You Tube at the "Show How You Care"

channel. Public voting will begin on Sept. 9.

For complete contest rules and information visit the Farmers Care Web site at: www.farmers-care.com/care/videocontest.

Contest Rules and Permission Forms

The contest rules and permission forms are available online as PDF documents. Click the links below to download the documents

[Contest Rules](#)

[Contest Parental Permission Form](#)

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Dake Tree Farm Follows 70-Year Plan

and the final harvest should include some trees suitable for utility poles and cabin timbers which bring specialty prices, said Grossman.

More recent harvests have been used for lumber and Dake hopes to have trees harvested that can be used for utility poles. The trees have to be excellent to be used for poles, she said.

The Dakes were one of the most active tree farms in the eastern Upper Peninsula, said retired Michigan Department of Natural Resources forester Bob DeVillez. The family hosted many tours and did a lot of public outreach promoting forestry, said DeVillez. Their efforts were recognized with

several awards including Michigan Outstanding Tree Farmer in 1985 and 1995, Michigan Educational Tree Farm of the Year in 1990 and the Luce-West Mackinac Soil and Water Conservation of the Year Award in 1995.

What impresses Grossman the most about the Dake tree farm is how they have followed their forest management plans ever since the beginning.

"Forestry is a long-term commitment. It's a good investment, it just takes time."

Room for Women at the Top says Indiana State Conservationist

The NRCS-Michigan Women's Special Emphasis Program sponsored a women's workshop in East Lansing on March 30. The featured speakers at the event were Lansing City Council Member Kathy Dunbar, NRCS-Indiana State Conservationist Jane Hardisty and Linda Hundt, owner of Sweetie-licious bakery and café in DeWitt. In the afternoon Area Conservationist Aaron Lauster gave instruction on basic self-defense.

Opportunities have greatly increased for women in the USDA and there is still room at the top. That was the message NRCS-Indiana State Conservationist Jane Hardisty delivered at a women's day workshop in East Lansing.

Hardisty, who grew up on an Indiana farm, looked into a job with NRCS in the mid-1970s after being told it was the "next best thing to farming." She got a rude awakening at her job interview. The human resources person she met with told her the interview was a waste of time. 'We don't hire women in agriculture,' was what Hardisty remembers being told.

After applying for positions with NRCS in other states, Hardisty was contacted by the state conservationist in Indiana. She was offered a job and became one of the first women hired by NRCS for a non-clerical position. Being one of the first female soil conservationists working for the agency carried a burden. One was the belief, even by herself, that she was hired because she was a woman.

"I always had to prove myself," Hardisty said.

Hardisty went on to become a district conservationist, a coordinator for the Resource Conservation and Development program and an area conservationist. She served as the Michigan state conservationist from 1997 to 2000 before returning to Indiana to become state conservationist there.

NRCS is a much more welcoming place for women today than it was when she started, said Hardisty. There are more opportunities and more specialized positions for women to take advantage of today. There are now more women in leadership roles such as assistant state conservationists, she said. However, women are



Top: NRCS employees listen to luncheon speaker Linda Hundt of Sweetie-licious pies during the NRCS Women's Day Workshop on March 30. Above: NRCS-Indiana State Conservationist Jane Hardisty talks about her career with NRCS.

underrepresented in executive positions within the agency. There are still not enough women state conservationists or women in executive positions in Washington, Hardisty said.

Hardisty encouraged those attending the workshop not to be shy about advancing their careers. While she considered each position in her career to be a good fit, she always found every position during her advance to state conservationist. When you work for NRCS you are not just a government employee but a public servant.

Forest Pests Come Back to Life in the Spring

by Bill Cook, MSU Extension Forester

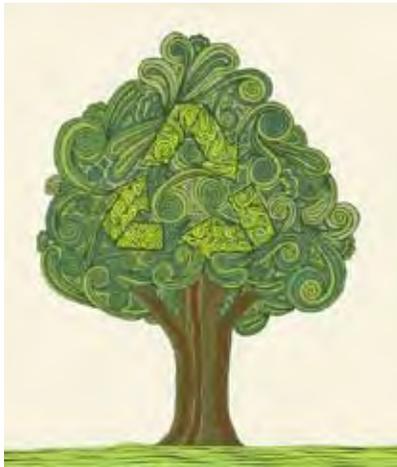
Spring time is when dormant ecosystems return to full vigor. This includes fungi, bacteria, and other pathogens. Soon enough, the bugs will be here, too. Most pathogens and insects are a natural and desirable part of a forest, even though some of us are not fond of them. And then, there are a few non-native pests that deserve special attention.

For the following reasons, and for more reasons to come, don't move firewood. The good old days are now gone when moving firewood was a harmless activity. This may be hard to believe, but it's been true over and over again.

Now is the time to avoid pruning and damaging oak trees. Every wound is a potential entry for oak wilt. This is a disease that is most definitely not wanted. It's expensive to eradicate and the visual impact is significant. Treatment in residential areas is particularly difficult. The highest risk season runs through July but infection is possible throughout the growing season.

An oak wound is one of the very few situations where a tree wound should be painted, and as soon as possible after the wound. While the wound is moist, the oak tree is vulnerable. If you have oaks along rights-of-way and roadsides, beware of maintenance crews. Some crews are notorious for spreading oak wilt. Others are quite careful. The same is true for tree care contractors.

A tree infected with oak wilt will lose all the leaves within a few weeks, sometimes more quickly. Leaf loss will begin at the top of the tree. However, oak wilt can be confirmed only through a laboratory test or presence of fruiting bodies under the bark. A trained eye and knowledgeable assessment may sometimes be adequate. Oak trees can succumb to a number of pests, some of which can appear like oak wilt.



Emerald ash borer (EAB) is common throughout most of the central states and has now been found in several locations in the Upper Peninsula and Wisconsin. Again, firewood is one of the most common ways this beetle has been transported.

EAB begins its work at the top of an ash tree and works its way down. The light green larvae feed on the live tissues under the bark. Fluid movement is interrupted and the upper leaves wilt and die. The process may take several years and looks similar to other ash maladies. Near the end, the tree will produce a bunch of shoots around the base of the tree trunk. Woodpeckers may frequent the trees looking for EAB larvae to eat.

Each spring, hundreds of purple trap boxes are hung in ash trees as part of a survey. If enough EAB adults are in the area, some may find their way to the trap boxes. In the fall, an empty trap is a good sign but not a sure indicator of EAB absence. If you think you have seen EAB, contact a forester or the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

Gypsy moth populations continue to fluctuate with spring weather conditions. In regions where gypsy moth has been around for several years, the populations become less explosive as native predators and parasites begin to "naturalize" the species. The larvae populations reach their peak in both numbers and individual size around the Memorial Day weekend, which can be inconvenient for backyard grillers and picnickers.

Gypsy moths prefer to eat the leaves of oaks, aspens, and apples. However, most other species will be attacked if larval populations grow large. In the northern regions, gypsy moths do not usually kill trees, unless the trees are already stressed from drought, old age, poor soils, or other predis-

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Planning Underway for Lenawee Center for Excellence Field Day

The details for this year's Center for Excellence field day in Lenawee County are coming together, and work is in progress for the demonstration plots.

The event will include corn demonstration plots comparing tillage demonstrations, new corn varieties, nitrogen management (minimizing off-site losses of nitrogen, new soil testing technology, high tech nitrogen application equipment), high production soybean systems, fungicide and foliar feed of soybeans, and soybean population study based on Cation Exchange Capacity.

This year's field day is scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 17, 2011, and will have presenters from around the country in the technical and academic world. Because of the high level of technical information provided attendees will be able to receive up to four restricted use pesticide credits and the event qualifies as a MAEAP phase I meeting.

Morning Program

Sessions start at Bakerlads Farm located on Cadmus Road, east of Morey Hwy. near Clayton. Guests will be able to attend five 30-minute concurrent sessions or three 30-minute sessions



and a trailer tour. Sessions will include soil quality, tillage demonstration, liberty link soybean, erosion reduction system, nitrogen management for water quality, and high production corn systems.

The event brings in over 400 farmers from Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana. The lunch time portion of the event will also feature a high-profile speaker. The noon speaker will be announced in the near future as soon as plans are confirmed.

Afternoon Program

Sessions continue at Raymond and Stutzman Farms located on Seneca Rd. in Seneca. Participants will be able to attend four 30-minute concurrent sessions or two 60-minute sessions. Sessions will include, twin row soybeans (strip-till versus vertical tillage tool), soybean populations by CEC, tillage equipment demonstrations, fungicide applications on corn and soybean systems, and using cover crops in a corn and soybean system (aerial application demonstration).

For updates visit the Lenawee Conservation District Web site at: lenaweeconservationdistrict.org.

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Forest Pests Take Many Forms

posing condition.

Beech bark disease will soon have killed most of the beech in Michigan, the last large North American stronghold for the tree species. Fortunately, a small percentage of beech are resistant and seeds have been collected. Hopefully, the genetically resistant species can be introduced back into the forest.

Historically, our northern forests have already seen widespread impact from exotic pests such as Dutch elm disease, white pine blister rust, and the larch casebearer. Elsewhere, North American

forest ecology has been altered by diseases such as chestnut blight and sudden oak death. In the future, we'll almost certainly see additional forest-damaging species such as the Asian long-horned beetle, hemlock woolly adelgid, and other insects and diseases. The number of severe forest threats is increasing. One of the best defenses is proactively managing the forest for maximum vigor and tree diversity. The forest is more complex than what you might think. Consult a professional forester.

Bill Cook is an MSU Extension forester providing educational programming for the Upper Peninsula.

Cinco de Mayo Event Offers Insights Into Hispanic Culture

It may be the best known Mexican holiday in the United States but Cinco de Mayo is not even an official holiday south of the border. The holiday, which commemorates the Battle of the Puebla, was adopted by Americans of Mexican heritage to celebrate their culture.

The history of Cinco de Mayo was one of the topics NRCS-Michigan employees learned about at a Cinco de Mayo celebration in Grand Rapids on May 5.

The Battle of the Puebla was fought in 1862 and was a victory for Mexican troops over the French. The event is not recognized as Mexican Independence Day which is celebrated on September 16, said Roberto Jara, executive director for Latin Americans United for Progress based in Holland.

Jara was one of the presenters at the event along with NRCS-Michigan employees. Other topics presented included working on special NRCS work details within and outside of Michigan and advice on how to engage Hispanic producers in NRCS conservation programs.



Roberto Jara (above), executive director for Latin Americans United for Progress in Holland, was a speaker at the 2011 NRCS-Michigan Cinco de Mayo celebration.



NRCS-Michigan employees Frank Velasquez and Linda Ortiz (above) gave a presentation on working with Hispanic producers at the Cinco de Mayo celebration. Velasquez and Ortiz told attendees that many first-generation Mexican-American producers are skeptical of government programs and NRCS employees must spend time to build trust.



NRCS-Michigan employees learned about opportunities to work on special details. Edwin Martinez (above), district conservationist for Clinton County, talked about his experience working on a special detail in Vera Cruz, Mexico. NRCS employees have served on details throughout the United States and the world. Some opportunities included disaster relief after Hurricane Katrina and missions to support agricultural initiatives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Celebrating Earth Day 2011



The Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi Indians celebrated Earth Day by dedicating their wetland restored through WRP. The tribe named the wetland, located near their tribal headquarters in Calhoun County, "Nottawaseppiniyek Dokmejwen" (Our Tribe's Peaceful Water). District Conservationist Ed Lusch was presented with a gift from the tribal member Jefferson Ballew, (top left) for his work in enrolling the land in WRP. A ceremony was held at the WRP site to dedicate the site (above).



The Shiawassee Conservation District celebrated Earth Day with a kindergarten class in Owosso (above). Each kindergartner was given a tree to plant. The Jackson CD participated in the Earth Day Festival in Jackson (above right).



Upcoming Events

June

- 1** Native Plant Workshop, 6 - 8 p.m., for more information contact the Kent County Conservation District at 616/942-4111 ext. 4
- 11** Native Plant Workshop, Jackson County Conservation District office, 211 W. Ganson St. - Jackson, Preregistration is required, for more information call 517/784-2800 ext. 214
- 12** Natural Shoreline Landscaping on Inland Lakes, Colon Public Library - Colon, for more information contact the St. Joseph Conservation District at 269/467-6336
- 13-14** Michigan Association of Conservation Districts Summer Conference, Kettunen Center - Tustin, for more information go to: www.macd.org
- 13-17** Wildland Firefighter Training, Bay Mills Community College - Brimley, For more information call Bay Mills Community College at 906/248-8401.
- 16-18** Three Rivers Water Festival, "River Clean up and Handicapped Accessible Boat Launches", Scidmore Park - Three Rivers, for more information contact the St. Joseph CD at 269/467-6336
- 23** Clare and Gladwin Counties Conservation Tour, for more contact the Gladwin County Farm Bureau at 989/426-2353 or e-mail at: vdonova@ctyfb.com

June Ctd.

- 24-25** Centreville Covered Bridges Days. "River Cleanup and Handicapped Accessible Boat Launches", County Courthouse - Centreville, for more information contact the St. Joseph CD at 269/467-6336

July

- 19-21** Michigan Ag Expo, Michigan State University - East Lansing, for more information go to www.agexpo.msu.edu
- 21** Berrien Conservation District Field Day, for more information call 269/471-9111 ext. 5

August

- 4** Farmers Market at the Capitol, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., East lawn of state capitol building - Lansing, for more information go to www.miffs.org
- 6** River Cleanup on the Rocky, Prairie, White Pigeon, and Fawn rivers in St. Joseph County, held each Saturday in August, for more information contact the St. Joseph CD at 269/467-6336
- 17** Lenawee Center for Excellence Field Day, Bakerlads Farm, Cadmus Road - Clayton, for more information see page 8
- 31** Shiawassee Conservation District and NRCS Ag Day Tour, for more information contact the Shiawassee CD at 989/723-8263, Ext. 3

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