



# BARRY CONSERVATION DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT 2023



**BARRY COUNTY RECYCLING**  
5 Collection Events  
30,033 lbs of electronics &  
4,500+ tires collected



**FARM ASSURANCE**  
50 Farms working with MAEAP  
42 NRCS contracts initiated with a  
value **greater than \$200,000**



**FOREST ASSISTANCE**  
2656 acres serviced  
5 educational field days  
288 trees and shrubs sold



**INVASIVE SPECIES TREATMENT**  
3000 acres surveyed  
150 acres of invasive plant control  
495 red swamp crayfish removed

## From Executive Director, Jamie Lewis Hedges:

I'm delighted to share noteworthy developments from the Barry Conservation District (BCD) as we reflect on the last year. We know that you imagine Barry County with clean water, healthy forests and thriving countryside. That's our dream as well, and we call it -

## Nurturing Resiliency: Farms, Forests and Waterways

Our values - nature, community, collaboration, growth, and diversity, equity & inclusion - remain at the core of our endeavors, guiding our daily actions.

We want to assist landowners interested in nurturing their land and animals with best practices in mind. With our partners, we are working to ensure local habitats have thriving flora and fauna by proactively managing forests, removing invasives, monitoring for pests, and cleaning up the waterways. Through Barry County Recycles, we are helping people recycle more, recycle right, and keep our county clean.

With your support, we are poised for another year of significant progress toward our collective vision of a resilient and thriving Barry County. Together, we are going to make Barry County even more amazing for everyone who lives here and visits!



Stay in touch!



Barrycd.org



@BarryCD



@BarryConservation

## Forests

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The Forestry Assistance Program (FAP) is here to help landowners achieve their goals for woodland management. In 2023, the FAP serviced 2,656 acres of forested land in Barry, Allegan, and Ottawa counties. The program had an estimated economic impact of \$428,900 through referrals to local consultants and applications for funding through public programs. BCD's FAP partnered with the White Oak Initiative to put on 5 field days to showcase management of that species. The White Oak Initiative is a diverse coalition of partners committed to the long-term sustainability of America's white oak forests as well as the benefits they provide. These field days were hosted in conjunction with the American Tree Farm System, which works to sustain forests through the power of private stewardship by offering forest certification for family forest landowners in the United States. We look forward to providing similar field days through programs like these in 2024!



White Oak Field Day @ Stearns Creek



Natural Shoreline installed by BCD

## Waterways

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In 2023, we wrapped up a Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership (MGLP) grant. The grant aimed to assess and conserve high-quality Michigan lakes for Cisco fish. BCD worked with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to survey lakes for existing populations and to install natural shorelines to protect water quality. BCD installed two natural shorelines on Wall Lake and one on Big Cedar Lake for a total of 4,451 square feet, including approximately 140 linear feet of shoreline. Natural shorelines provide stabilization and habitat to support a diverse population of insects, birds, and other wildlife. This year, we focused on maintaining and monitoring the project sites to ensure long-term success of the plants. BCD partnered in the Thornapple River Clean-Up. There were 28 Barry County volunteers who cleaned 12 river miles of 20+ bags worth of trash, 4 tires, and more. Check out the photos on Facebook and get involved @ThornappleRiverWatershedCouncil.

## Farms

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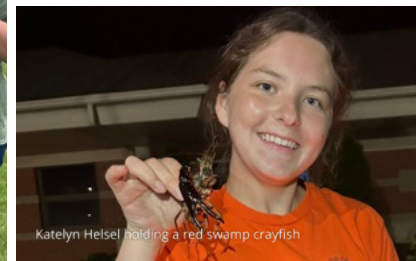
The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) program offers free confidential environmental assessments for producers in the state of Michigan to help identify potential pollution risks. I have spent my first few months learning the program and becoming comfortable with both Ionia and Barry counties. For 2024, I would like to build the program in both Ionia and Barry County by getting more producers involved in the program through on farm assessments. MAEAP offers verifications and potential legal protections in Cropping, Farmstead, Livestock, and Forest Wetland and Habitat.



Sara Krieger verifying a farm in Ionia



Mile-a-minute weed leaf



Katelyn Hesel holding a red swamp crayfish

## Invasive Species

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Barry Calhoun Kalamazoo Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (BCK CISMA) continues develop partnerships in the tri-county area in effort to increase awareness of invasive species. Services are available to control high priority species, such as mile-a-minute weed, Japanese knotweed, phragmites and black swallow-wort. The CISMA strike team was able to control invasive species across 149 acres, the majority of which was mile-a-minute weed at 120 acres in eastern Calhoun County. Another year of controlling red swamp crayfish in Vicksburg, MI resulted in over 480 adult red swamp crayfish and hundreds of babies removed from a tributary of the Kalamazoo River. This was completed once a week at night using headlamps and hand grabbing individuals from a creek. In coordination with MDARD, the CISMA strike team monitored shipping and travel routes for spotted lantern fly. This was done using traps on trees that attract these bugs. We are happy to report no individuals were discovered. The threat of these insects is ever increasing with new sightings found in Indiana and Illinois in 2023. In 2024, we look forward to expanding our outreach efforts for mile-a-minute weed, continuing to assist landowners in controlling invasive species in Barry, Calhoun and Kalamazoo counties.



## Produce Safety

Morgan Anderson  
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Similar to the MAEAP program, produce safety technicians provide on-farm technical assistance and education. We help growers navigate produce safety standards and tailor solutions based on the operation's food safety goals and needs. We aid in preparing growers for future MDARD inspections and assist with food safety plan development. All services provided are free, voluntary, confidential and non-regulatory. My service area comprises 9 counties in west Michigan and the produce safety program is a comprehensive resource which requires broad and niche knowledge. During my first year in this role, I dedicated my time to complete 50 various training opportunities, performed 80 farm visits, and initiated Produce Safety Certification with 11 farms in the region. If you know of any folks or organizations in Barry County that would be interested, please contact Morgan.



## Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS)

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Landowners of Barry County have access to programs that offer assistance to implement conservation practices through the local NRCS office. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) which had 15 contracts in 2023, many for forest management and cover crops. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) which helps remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production, was utilized by 23 landowners. Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) had 2 wildlife focused projects go to contract in 2023. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps you build on existing conservation efforts had two applications go to contract. NRCS office is looking forward to further assisting landowners and working with the new MAEAP technician.



Electronic Recycling Event

## Barry County Recycles

Rachel Frantz • recycle@barrycounty.org • 269.908.4099

Rachel Frantz is now in her third annual contract with Barry County as Recycling Coordinator. In 2023, Rachel authored 12 educational recycling columns in the Hastings Reminder. She created 38 Facebook posts and reached 31,000 people. Rachel attended 27 local meetings, tabled at three events reaching 479 people. Rachel gave three public presentations, which reached a total of 174 people. Rachel acquired a Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Rural Electronics Recycling grant which has helped fund TV and monitor recycling in Barry County and an EGLE scrap tire collection grant. Through these grants, Rachel organized three electronics collections with PADNOS and two scrap tire collections. These events collected over 30,000lbs of e-waste, including over 17,500lbs of TVs and monitors, and over 4,500 tires.



Soil Painting



Family fishing at Outdoor Youth Day



Randy Heinze (left) speaking about wildlife

## Outdoor Recreation Youth Day

Jamie Hedges • jamie.hedges@macd.org • 269.908.4135

The revival of Outdoor Recreation Youth Day in August drew 239 children, 328 total with parents/guardians. Fundraising partners contributed to the event's success. This year's partners included Barry County Parks, National Deer Association, Alder Creek Angling, Battle Creek Outdoor Education Center, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Southwest Michigan Seek and Search Club, Blue Zones, Scouts, Sportsman's Outreach, Gun Lake Tribe, North Country Trail Association - Chief Noonday Chapter, and Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. We are looking ahead to 2024 with confidence. BCD will continue to lead event planning efforts, with the help of our community. The event will feature diverse outdoor experiences such as, paddling, rock climbing, educational speakers and activity-focused exhibits from many of the partners listed.

## UPCOMING EVENTS 2024

### Faces of Conservation

February 23, 7 -9 pm | Walldorff Brewpub | \$15

### Wilderness First Aid

March 16-17, 8am - 4pm | TBD | \$300

### Backyard Conservation

April 13 | TBD | \$10

### Birding with B.C. Bird Club

April 20, 9 AM | Mill Pond Recreation Area | Free

### Tree Sale

April 26-27 | Charlton Park | Order at BarryCD.org/trees

### Household Hazardous Waste

TBD | Barry County Expo Center

### Electronic Waste Collection

June 1 | Delton Kellogg High School

### Household Hazardous Waste

September 7 | Barry County Expo Center

### Outdoor Youth Day

September 21 | Charlton Park | Free

*Details Subject to Change*

## To the Barry County Community,

I would like to thank all the people who have helped make my time on the board so rewarding.

We have navigated through a trying time with the COVID lockdown in addition to multiple challenges we have overcome. In 2023, we had multiple staff changes including our Executive Director. Sarah Nelson has taken on an incredible opportunity with the Department of Natural Resources. We are thankful for her years of service with the District and have hired our new Executive Director, Jamie Lewis Hedges.

In 2024, I say goodbye, as I step down from my position as board chair. Please know that the Barry Conservation District is in a strong position with good and capable people on staff. I hope you continue to support this fine organization moving forward.

*Fred Flower*

Barry Conservation District Board Chairman



## Fiscal Year 2023 - Financial Review

### Overall

Revenue: \$242,184

\*Expenses: \$353,153

\*Grants are operated on a reimbursement basis which often don't line-up with the Fiscal Year

### Detailed Revenue

State Grants: \$138,579

County Appropriations: \$32,500

Donations: \$2,735

Tree Sale: \$19,390

Service Rendered: \$35,626

### Detailed Expenses

District Operations: \$132,753

Tree Sale: \$13,789

Recycling: \$35,341

Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program: \$69,238

Forest Assistance Program (MDARD): \$72,558

Spotted Lantern Fly Monitoring (MDARD): \$4,034

**BCD owes its success to the many individuals and organizations with whom we collaborate. While space does not allow us to list them all, our partners include:**

- Barry County Community Foundation
- Pierce Cedar Creek Institute
- Gun Lake Tribe
- Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy
- Chief Noonday Chapter of North Country Trail
- Barry County
- Barry-Eaton District Health Department
- National Deer Association
- Alder Creek Angling
- Battle Creek Outdoor Education Center
- MDNR, MDARD, and EGLE
- Southwest Michigan Seek and Search Club
- Blue Zones Activate Barry County
- Sportsman's Outreach
- Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds
- **and many, many others!**