



Chris Crosby named Conservationist of the Year



## 2020 Oceana Conservation District's Annual Report

# Letter from the Leadership

COVID-19 derailed some of our plans and tested our resiliency, but it couldn't keep us from moving forward with our mission. We continued to provide one-on-one technical assistance to farmers and landowners, offered educational programs to curious minds, and were a voice for the natural resources in Oceana County. We distributed tens of thousands of native trees, shrubs, and potted plants, and established 40 acres of pollinator habitat, sowing seeds of hope. We also created a nature preserve.



**Suzie Knoll**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Over the last year, many of us have come to realize that nature is more important than ever. Lockdowns and closures have forced us to pause our busy schedules, cancel indoor activities, and reevaluate the value of the natural world. Nature not only provides a safe place during a pandemic, but it also provides many health and cognitive ben-

efits. A walk in the forest or along the lake-shore is refreshing, calming, and energizing. It is no small wonder that in times of stress, we need the outdoors more than ever.

Maybe creating a nature preserve couldn't have been more timely? Richard and Lorayne Otto gifted 80 acres of mature forest to the Oceana Conservation District in 2019. A year later, trails have been developed, a parking lot and signage have been installed, and we introduced the community to the Otto Nature Preserve. People came and the effort has been one of the District's biggest accomplishments in 2020.

Looking forward, we have some really exciting things in store for 2021! We are hoping to extend our efforts to preserve more land and create more trails. Planning is also underway to continue to grow our education program. Kari Wilson of Pentwater, a recently retired teacher and nature enthusiast, will launch our Knee-High Naturalists Program for preschoolers and will help us expand our summer day camp program.

Cheers to 2021!

- S Knoll

OceanaConservationDistrict.org

1064 Industrial Park Dr.  
Shelby, MI 49455  
(231) 861-5600



**Biggest Sales Event Ever!**  
**NAPA Spring Farm & Fleet Sale**

**MARCH**  
**15<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>**



**AUTO & TRUCK PARTS**



**OPEN 7 DAYS**  
**OPEN HOLIDAYS**

**231-873-5687** • [www.napaonline.com](http://www.napaonline.com)  
**Downtown Hart** • Monday-Friday 7:30-6; Saturday 7:30-4; Sunday 9-2



## 2020 Oceana Conservation District's Annual Report

• published March 4, 2021 in the Oceana's Herald-Journal



*All stories and photos provided  
by the Oceana Conservation District except where noted.*

published by



**Ludington Daily News**

202 N Rath Ave., P.O. Box 340, Ludington, MI 49431  
(231) 845-5181 • (231) 843-4011 fax

**Oceana's Herald-Journal**

123 State Street, PO Box 190, Hart, MI 49420  
(231) 873-5602 • (231) 873-4775 fax

**White Lake Beacon**

PO Box 98, Whitehall, MI 49461  
(231) 894-5356 • (231) 894-2174 fax

**Publisher:** Ray McGrew

**VP/CRO:** Banks Dishmon

**Sales:** Monica Evans, Jim Johnson,  
Shelley Kovar, Jan Thomas, Stacie Wagner

**Graphics:** Judy Lytle, Shanon McDowell,  
Julie Eilers, Robin Moline, Candy Bryant

**News:** David Bossick – Ludington  
Jeff Kiessel – Ludington  
John Cavanagh – Hart  
Amanda Dodge – Hart  
Jared Leatzow – Whitehall

© Copyright 2020 Shoreline Media  
[www.shorelinemedia.net](http://www.shorelinemedia.net)

*Working Side by Side  
with growers to improve  
land conservation practices*



**CROP CONSULTATION**  
**SEED**  
**FERTILIZER**  
**AGRICULTURAL**  
**CHEMICALS**  
**SOIL SAMPLING**

*Helena strives to help customers succeed  
by providing high-quality products & technical advice  
... turning problems into solutions!*



**HELENA AGRI-ENTERPRISES**

37 W. Third Street  
Shelby, MI 49455 • 231-861-2526



Better View Farm, owned by Joel and Michelle McCormick, recently renewed their MAEAP verification for Farmstead and Cropping Systems on their farm.



Staff and volunteers load tires on to a semi-trailer that will be sent to CM Rubber Technologies, a recycling company that uses the tires to make products such as landscaping mulch, playground cover, mats, drain field aggregate, and equestrian footing. The scrap tire collection is made possible through a grant from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.



Forester Rod Denning places a customer's tree order in their vehicle. Oceana Conservation District coordinated a drive-through pickup service at the Oceana County Fairgrounds in April.

## Oceana Conservation District's 2020 Accomplishments at a Glance

MAEAP verifications (new or re-verified in 2020).....	29
Forest landowners assisted.....	145
Acres enrolled into Qualified Forest Program.....	2,770
USDA funds farmers received for conservation/restoration.....	\$472,186
Tree/shrub seedlings sold.....	19,700
Culms of dune grass sold.....	129,000
Acres of pollinator habitat planted.....	40
Acres planted with no-till grain drill.....	566
Acres of invasive species treated.....	64
Number of hemlock trees treated for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.....	6,487
Pounds of hazardous waste collected.....	28,130
Plastic ag containers collected and recycled.....	6,850
Scrap tires collected and recycled.....	1,050
Wells tested for nitrates.....	34
Scholarships awarded.....	6



### Knoop Excavating Service

35 Years Experience - Tom Knoop  
**231-832-2139** [Leave Message](#)  
**Complete Bank Stabilization**

- Shoreline Erosion Control
- Great Lakes - Inland Lakes
- Breakwalls - Water Brakes
- Boulders - Rip Rap
- River Restoration Work
- Natural Rip Rap - Wood - Permitting

# Jack D. Lake receives the 2020 MAEAP Award

By Lynda Herremans

OCEANA MAEAP TECHNICIAN

The 2020 MAEAP Award recipient Jack Lake is being recognized for his legacy of service to the Oceana Conservation District, to Oceana County's farmers, landowners and homeowners and for his dedication to agriculture and conservation of our soil and water resources throughout a career that spanned 49 years! Sadly, Jack passed away on April 27, 2020 at the age of 87, so his award will be presented to his wife Wanda by the Oceana Conservation District.

Jack was born and raised on a farm in Eaton County, Michigan. He graduated with a Bachelor's of Science degree from Michigan State University. After graduation he served in Korea for the US Army, married Wanda and then began his career with the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in 1962. In 1972, he and Wanda moved to Shelby to become Oceana County's first USDA District Conservationist. Here, he and Wanda raised their 4 children. Jack assisted farmers with soil conservation practices such as no-till planting, grassed waterways, erosion control structures, tile drainage, sod establishment in orchards, field windbreaks, livestock waste containment and tree planting. In those days, wind erosion was a significant problem in asparagus fields and Jack was instrumental in introducing the use of rye cover crops in asparagus. When the Hart Dam was breached in the flood of 1986, it was Jack who recommended seeding rye in the Hart lakebed and was able to procure federal funding to do an aerial seedling to help keep additional sediment from moving into the South Branch of the Pentwater River. The Shelby Field Office was one of SCS State Office's favorite locations to send new trainees because of the variety of great learning experiences Jack gave new employees.

In November 1990, Jack retired from federal service and less than a year later began working for the Oceana Conservation District running the no-till drill program and providing other technical services on a part-time basis. In 1995, the District received a Groundwater Stewardship Program (GWSP) Grant and Jack became the first Groundwater Technician. During his years as a Groundwater Technician, Jack performed risk assessments on farmsteads to help growers identify potential pollution risks and helped them find methods to address those risks. The GWSP was able to cost-share many of the practices needed to protect groundwater such as fuel transfer pads, nurse tanks, spill kits, and abandoned wells closures. Jack assisted landowners in closing more than 200 abandoned wells in our county. In 2003, GWSP became the Michigan Agriculture



MAEAP Technician explains the importance of an Agri-chemical Containment Facility in protecting surface and groundwater resources at this 2001 Conservation Farm Tour. The building is used for secondary containment of pesticides for storage, mixing and loading. Also pictured are Leroy Glover, Eric Herrygers, Chris Crosby (all board members at that time) and producer Todd Fox.

Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) and Jack became Oceana's first MAEAP Technician. As MAEAP Technician, Jack continued performing risk assessments on farmsteads and later on cropping and livestock assessments were added. In 2005, Jack assisted NJ Fox & Sons, Inc. to attain the county's first MAEAP Verification. When Jack retired from his second career as a technician for the Oceana Conservation District in 2011, he had successfully helped more than 30 farms reach over 50 verifications making Oceana County one of the leaders in the state for verifications. Jack was also a past recipient of the "Oceana Friend of Agriculture Award" presented by the Agricultural Banquet Committee for contributions to the Ag Community.

One of Jack's favorite programs was the Household Hazardous Waste Program (HHW). He was one of the driving forces in getting the program started in 2006, and was on hand to help coordinate its first Collection in 2007. Even after his second retirement, Jack continued to serve on the HHW Steering Committee and volunteered every year on HHW Collection Day.

For those of us who knew Jack, he is best described as a "colorful character". He was always on the move, was passionate about life and his work, and enjoyed many hobbies including golf, fishing, hunting and old tractors. His work ethic, organization and knowledge of all things relating to agriculture and conservation were admirable. Following in his footsteps as the MAEAP Technician is humbling, and I see so much evidence of his work as I visit with farmers on their farms. As one of many SCS trainees that started a natural resource career with his guidance, I will be forever grateful and am proud to call him not only my predecessor but a true mentor and friend. I can think of no one more deserving of this award.



Volunteers from the first Household Hazardous Collection in 2007 with their affiliations at the time from left to right: Kathy Carter, Board Member; Willidene Hutton, Executive Director; Chris Crosby, Board Member; Mark Hill, Michigan Dept. of Health; Jack Lake, MAEAP Technician; Larry VanSickle, Oceana County Commissioner and Paul Inglis, Oceana County Administrator..



Jack Lake participated in the Oceana Conservation District's Annual 6th Grade Conservation Tour for more than 30 years. This 2005 photo depicts Jack presenting on groundwater using the "duck pond". OCD Directors Leroy Glover and Chris Crosby were assisting in the presentation.



Former Oceana MAEAP Technician Jack Lake and owner of Stony Acres Farm Leroy Glover, stand next to the Glover's new MAEAP sign in 2007. Within two years, all the Oceana Conservation District Board Members, including Glover, reached MAEAP Verification status with Lake's assistance. The Oceana Conservation District was the first conservation district in the state of Michigan to have all five of its directors become MAEAP Verified. Glover, now a past director and current Household Hazardous Waste Committee member was chosen as the Friend of Ag recipient by the Oceana Ag Banquet Committee in 2020 for his many contributions past and present to the agricultural community.



West Central Groundwater Stewardship Technicians Murray Stall and Jack Lake received the 2002 Award for Excellence for outstanding contribution to the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program by Roberta Dow, MSU Extension Groundwater Agent. The duo shared one full-time technician position for many years working in their respective counties for first the Groundwater Stewardship Program and then the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program.



Jack Lake and Phil Carter, Shelby Future Farmers of America Advisor, are examining a no-till cornfield near the school in 1982. Jack assisted many landowners throughout his tenure with no-till plantings to help control erosion.

# Five candidates vie for three open seats

## CONTESTED ELECTION

Due to the continuing concern of spreading the coronavirus at large gatherings, Oceana Conservation District will not be hosting its traditional annual meeting at the Agricultural and Natural Resources Banquet in March. An election will take place, however, and it will be a contested one. Please read on for details about how to vote.

Who: Voters must be a resident of Oceana County

When: Saturday, April 17, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Where: Oceana County Fairgrounds

Residents in Oceana County have the opportunity to elect board members who will guide and oversee the District's programs that promote the conservation of local natural resources. Preparations are underway to host a drive-through election during the annual Tree Sale on April 17 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Oceana County Fairgrounds in Hart. Customers picking up pre-ordered tree/shrub seedlings will have an opportunity to fill out a ballot while in line. Voters who are not picking up trees will be directed to a voting line. Absentee ballots will be available at the District's office located at 1064 Industrial Park Drive in Shelby. Please call (231) 861-5600 as the office is currently open by appointment only.

• **Larry Byl** graduated from Shelby High School and Hope College. He has been a real estate broker in Oceana County for over 40 years and an asparagus farmer for 20 years. Larry has a long history of service in the community. He has served on the Oceana County Board of Commissioners, Oceana County Planning Commission, Michigan Works West Central Board, Shelby Village Council, Shelby Bank Board of Directors, and sits on several lake improvements boards. He has been a member of the Shelby Rotary Club for 40 years and is a life-long member of New Era Reformed Church. Larry is married to Ann Byl, has three children and eight grandchildren.

Byl is currently living on a 70-acre hobby farm in the Shelby area where he plants crops for wildlife and soil improvement. As an owner of a Lake Michigan cottage, he has observed erosion as well as invasive plant and pest issues over the last 45 years, and is interested in getting more involved in efforts to protect the shoreline, forests, and natural areas of Oceana County. He and his family members are actively involved in agriculture and with the Parks and Recreation Commissions in Oceana and Muskegon Counties. He enjoys hiking, hunting, fishing, sailing and spending time with his grandchildren.

Larry has been a strong supporter of the Oceana Conservation District and readily promotes the District's programs and services. He facilitated the process of acquiring the 80-acre parcel of land that was donated to the dis-

trict in 2019 and helped make the Otto Nature Preserve a reality.

"I feel my background in agriculture and real estate will be helpful in fulfilling the mission of the Oceana Conservation District's board. I will actively seek to assist with invasive species control, educational opportunities for our youth with a focus on our local natural resources, and will promote the mission of the District board," Byl said.

• **Joe Klimovitz** is a retired video/photojournalist and a long-time resident of Oceana County. During his 46-year career, he covered major news events including natural disasters, military efforts in Iraq, 9/11, and the Olympics to name a few.

Joe is married to Cathy Forbes, a native to Oceana County and an elected board member of the Oceana County Road Commission. They have two daughters who attended Hesperia Community Schools before going on to University of Michigan and Central Michigan University. Joe enjoys actively managing and enhancing forest, wetland and grassland habitats on his 40-acre property in Newfield Township.

Joe's interest in the Oceana Conservation District started with purchasing trees at the annual tree sale. He then started working with the Conservation District to plant several acres of pollinator habitat on his property and began volunteering his time with the District. Because of his habitat management experience and passion for conservation, he was appointed as an associate board member in

2019 and subsequently as a voting member in 2020 when an election was cancelled due to Covid-19. Currently Joe is a fully participating, active member of the board of the Oceana Conservation District, and would like to retain his post on the board.

Klimovitz started a community outreach project for the district, utilizing his skills as a photojournalist and videographer to produce a video highlighting the programs and services of the District, and regularly posting on social media to encourage public awareness of the district. Aside from these undertakings, Joe has been instrumental in clearing the trails in preparation of the Otto Nature Preserve.

"My passion for the environment led me to the Oceana Conservation District. As someone who is already familiar with the District's programs, I'm ready to jump in and continue as an active board member on day one" Klimovitz said.

• **Jim Nicholas** is a water-resource scientist, currently consulting part-time after working for the U.S. Geological Survey for 33 years, including as Director of the USGS Water Science Center in Michigan. As Center Director, he developed strategic plans, developed proposals for funding projects, and managed water-resource data collection and research. Water-research topics included beach bacteria, invasive species, lake eutrophication, groundwater availability and quality, and relation of land-use practices to water quality. The geographic extent of



**Byl**



**Klimovitz**



**Nicholas**



**Payne**



**Sheppard**

the work ranged from municipal water supply to bi-national Great Lakes water quality.

His current work is mostly related to groundwater and surface water interactions, Great Lakes issues, and as an appointee to Michigan's Water Use Advisory Council. The Council includes representatives from agricultural growers associations, irrigators, conservation districts, major water users, environmental groups and state agencies.

Jim served for many years on the board of the Memorial Nature Preserve at Little Point Sable, both on the education committee and as president of the board. He enjoys hunting, nature photography, birdwatching, hiking and camping. He also volunteers as financial secretary at New Hope Community Church in Shelby and as chair of the committee starting up Young Life at Shelby High School.

The Oceana Conservation District held their 2020 wildflower walk on Jim and Bonnie Nicholas' wooded property and plans to do so again in 2021. He has also participated in the OCD-led Christmas Bird Counts.

"I am familiar with the issues and priorities in the District's five-year strategic plan and I believe that my experience with strategic planning, grant writing, natural resource issues and science, agricultural interests, and conservation would be an asset to the OCD Board," Nicholas said.

• **Denny Payne** lives at 3851 S. 72nd Ave. on Dorrance Creek in Shelby with his wife, Brenda, and daughter, Kasey.

Denny was born and raised in Oceana County, graduating from Shelby High School class of 1975. He immediately went into the workforce with a job at

New Era Feed Mill for the DeVos family and later received further education at, what he refers to as, the Woller Institute of Agriculture for three years managing the Woller family pig barn. Denny continued working in ag supply for almost 40 years, including for Tri-County Feeds and most recently 19 years with the local co-op system which ended with the closing of the Ceres Solutions Hart location.

While working in ag supply, Denny had daily opportunities to provide customers with information regarding best practices for soil testing, seed selection and mixing, fertilizer recommendations, pest control and erosion prevention.

Denny enjoys educating his grandchildren about native plants, animal and bird species and how we can help to sustain them in their natural habitats. He also enjoys gardening, reading and studying local history.

"A few of my concerns for Oceana County are the gradual widening of streams and creeks, upcoming decisions regarding Marshville Dam and the diseases affecting our beautiful trees. I look forward to serving our district in hands-on ways and by networking to develop ways to preserve our land and waterways for our future generations. To accomplish this, we need to find ways to bring together farmers and non-farm residents to common understanding regarding land and property issues," Payne said.

• **Mary Sheppard** graduated from MSU in 2013 with a B.S. in Crop and Soil Science. After graduation, she began working at Ceres Co-Op in Hart as a Certified Crop Advisor where she was employed until the fall of 2020.

Mary then accepted a job as Field Manager for Golden Stock Farms in Mears, a 1,000-acre farm growing corn, soybeans and small grains but focusing mainly on asparagus.

During her time at the Co-Op, Mary ran an irrigation monitoring program to track water in the soil profile and irrigate more efficiently to reduce runoff. She also has five years of experience running a soil nitrogen monitoring program which involved pulling extensive soil and tissue samples to help growers better monitor and understand their soil nitrogen cycles from manure, fertilizer, and soil organic matter. She has long been an avid supporter of cover crops and has given multiple hands-on presentations on MAEAP farm tours about the benefits and practicality of specific cover crops.

Mary is a board member and the membership captain of the Oceana County Farm Bureau and a board member of the West Shore Community College Agriculture program. In the Agriculture program, her team helps the coordinators develop curriculum and connect students with industry representatives.

In her free time, she enjoys almost any outdoor activity including cross country skiing, fishing, kayaking and backpacking. She has a personal goal to hike all 1,200 miles of the North Country Scenic Trail in Michigan.

"I believe I would be an excellent board member for the Oceana Conservation District because I am in a unique position to bridge the gap that often occurs between agriculture and natural resources. My passion for agriculture and for natural resources runs deep and I want to make sure both are successful and well preserved for future generations," Sheppard said.

# Crops, conservation and Crosbys



John Cavanagh • Oceana's Herald-Journal

## 4th generation farmer Chris Crosby named Conservationist of the Year

By Sharon Hallack  
OHJ CONTRIBUTING WRITER

What began on a farm in Elbridge Township 157 years ago, continues today - crops, conservation and the Crosby family. Chris Crosby, a fourth generation farmer and owner of Crosby Farms, at 2264 E. Tyler Rd. in Hart, has been named the Soil Conservationist of the Year by the Oceana County Soil Conservation District.

"The Oceana Soil Conservation District (SCD) in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service makes the selection based on a candidate's level of commitment to environmental stewardship on their farm. Chris has been working with the NRCS and SCD for years to implement conservation practices on his farm. He's also shown his commitment to promoting

Chris Crosby has been named Conservationist of the Year, and is a fourth generation farmer on his family's 157-year-old working farm, Crosby Farms. He, along with wife, Laura, and their sons, Ryan and Ray have expanded their small garden stand to Crosby Farm Market which offers an assortment of local produce and antiques.

conservation, stewardship and sustainable use of the natural resources of Oceana County by serving as an active board member for 17 years! (2003 - 2020)," said Suzie Kroll, executive director of the SCD.

"Our farm is 157 years old and could possibly be one of the oldest working farms in Oceana County," said Crosby. "My great-grandfather, Daniel Crosby, came from Bath, N.Y. to Elbridge in 1864 to teach English to the local Native Americans. He also raised cash crops and sheep. One hundred years ago this year, my dad, Ray, and his twin brother, Redmond, were born here. Back in 1972, my dad started working with Jack Lake and the soil conservation district putting in some tiling on the farm. Over the years we became good friends. I first got to know Jack when I attended ag classes in Shelby for half a day. In 1994, my wife, Laura, and I took over the farm operation. In 2003, Jack contacted me to see if I'd be interested in filling out the remainder of a term for someone who had left the board. After I completed that partial term, I decided to run for another term and another and another. I stayed on the board a total of 17 years altogether."

"Over the years I've been on a number of committees, help-

ing with farm conservation tours for sixth grade students, tree sale days and Adopt a Highway cleanups as well as sitting on the Household Hazardous Waste and Groundwater Stewardship Committees. The goal of the conservation district is to promote practices that will protect our environment. Our farm is part of the Pentwater River watershed, so in 2004, we made some modifications to help protect the natural resources surrounding us. We installed a new farm well and fuel pad and installed a drive through chemical shed."

Knoll added, "Chris' farm has been environmentally verified with our Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) since 2006. He has also worked with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to enroll in the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program on both his forest and cropland. Through these programs he has implemented a variety of agricultural and forestry-based practices that help to prevent erosion, maintain healthy soils, and protect groundwater."

"We've utilized a variety of environmental practices over the years, including nutrient and pest management, no-till and cover



cropping, installation of a riparian forest buffer and grassed waterway, pollinator plantings and a forest management plan,” Crosby explained. “Two years ago we planted two wild-flower pollinator plantings. It takes about three years for this type of planting to take off, so we are excited to see what happens this year. We were also able to set up a Qualified Forest Plan for our woodlots about four years ago.”

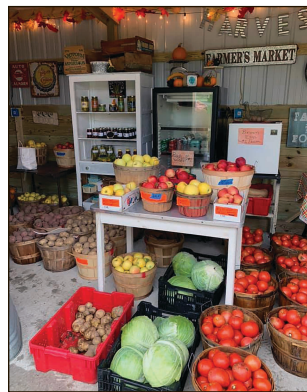
He added that their farm is 336 acres total, with 200 of that as woodlot acreage. The remainder of the farm is in asparagus and Christmas trees. “My dad used to say ‘Always treat your woods like another crop’ and I’ve never forgotten that,” Crosby said. “I’ve always enjoyed spending time in the woods, from making maple syrup to cutting firewood.”

— Chris Crosby  
Crosby Farms

Those time-honored traditions carry on, and along with the new ventures they have planned, there is much for the Crosby family to look forward to.

“I stepped down from the board two years ago when we decided to start our farm market, so I could devote more time to getting that up and running. We’d had a small garden stand for years, but we decided to expand and are now offering more local produce and antiques. We enjoy meeting different people, sharing recipes and such.” Chris’ wife, Laura, added, “It’s a learning curve, figuring out what does and doesn’t sell. Even though it is a lot of work, it’s become a lot easier after moving to the main farm

“My dad used to say ‘Always treat your woods like another crop’ and I’ve never forgotten that. I’ve always enjoyed spending time in the woods, from making maple syrup to cutting firewood.”



Crosby Farm Market, located at 2264 E. Tyler Rd, in Hart is open seven days a week from Spring through Christmas, with hours varying based on the time of year. Visit their Facebook page for their latest offerings and open times.



three years ago.”

“It’s become a family hobby,” said Crosby. Chris and Laura’s sons, Raymond and Ryan live at home and help when they are able, while their daughter, Ashley, and her husband, Troy, live in Allendale.

In closing Crosby said, “It’s been a great experience sitting on

the board all these years, and it is an honor to be named Conservationist of the Year. I would encourage every landowner to contact the Soil Conservation District office to learn more about the many programs and practices they offer to help preserve and protect our environment.”

• Contributed photos



# Otto Nature Preserve now open for hiking

The Otto Nature Preserve is ready for your enjoyment! In 2019, Richard and Lorayne Otto generously donated 80 acres of forested land to the Oceana Conservation District. The donors requested that the land be protected in perpetuity for habitat conservation, education, research, forest management, and non-motorized outdoor recreation to the public. With these intentions in mind, the conservation district prepared the nature preserve for public use.

In the spring and summer of 2020, staff and volunteers used their expertise to conduct a biological inventory of the trees, plants, birds, mammals, and fungi on the property. Our forester developed a Forest Stewardship Plan which assessed the “value” of the forest and provided guidelines for managing the forest. The forest value is not for timber purposes, but rather the intrinsic value of the ecology and habitat of the land.

Fridays in September were set aside for work days at the property. Staff, board members, and community members worked together to install signage and to develop a system of two trails through the property which are delineated by trail markers on the trees.

The trails consist of two connecting loops. The first

loop (Oak Trail) is 0.7 miles in length, starting and ending at the parking lot. A second loop (Beech-Maple Trail) is a 0.9 mile spur off the Oak Trail, extending farther west. Linked together, the trail system is 1.5 miles around the perimeter of the property. The forest changes in elevation across the terrain, so the trails are moderately steep in a few locations. Signs to interpret the natural features of the property are in development and will be placed along the trails this spring.

Upon completion of the summer's work, the Oceana Conservation District held a dedication ceremony for the Otto Nature Preserve.

We presented a plaque to Richard and Lorayne Otto as a sincere gesture of appreciation. Though the day of the ceremony was windy, cold and wet, the Otto family made the sojourn from Dewitt, MI to be honored. Many community members attended the ceremony to extend thanks and appreciation to the Ottos for their generous donation.

The Nature Preserve is located at 3001 16th Avenue (Scenic Drive) in Shelby. Please use the Otto Nature Preserve parking lot and respect adjacent private property. Foot traffic only. We hope to see you there!



## The Otto Nature Preserve from a Forester's perspective

The District's new nature preserve is a gem of a forest, and is considered a mesic northern hardwoods forest consisting primarily of beech, maple and hemlock. The forest type is typically on moist to dry-mesic sites found mostly north of the climatic tension zone. This zone is generally around the Oceana and Muskegon County lines, putting the forest very close to the boundary of the southern limit of northern plant species and the northern limit of southern plant species. The forest is dominated by American beech, sugar maple, red maple, and Northern red oak, however in all, there are 16 species of trees identified on the property. It is interesting to note that only one single individual has been found of basswood and white oak.

A Forest Stewardship Plan has been created to help guide the future stewardship of the property. Six management units have been identified, and the plan describes in detail the various characteristics of the forest.

Pre-settlement vegetation maps that identify the landscape as it was in the early 1800s suggest that the property was once part of a much larger beech-maple-hemlock forest that covered two-thirds of the future county's land area. During widespread settlement of the mid to late 1800s, these forests were very desirable because the white pine was used for lumber and the bark of hemlocks was used to produce tannin for the tanning industry. It is likely that most of the forested areas in the area were cleared during this time period.

In order to get a better picture of more recent history, aerial photos from 1938 were examined. The property 83 years ago was also a dense forest, as it appears today. However, a clearing where the new parking lot is today was once a square open area, perhaps initially used as a pasture, later was used as a logging staging area. Also, along a portion of the north property boundary on the adjacent property is a large opening used for agriculture or a pasture. Interestingly, barbed wire was found grown into a large beech tree on the property, suggesting animals were once pastured nearby.

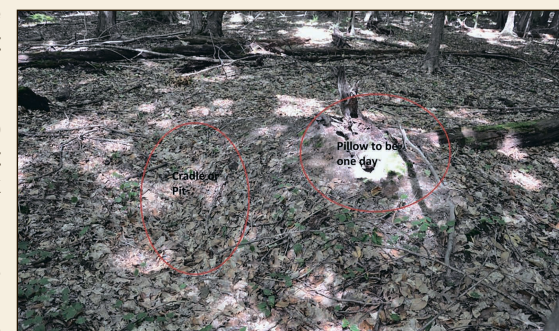
Looking at the forest floor of the property also gives us clues as to the forest's history. Large, old growing trees are common, with some hemlock, white pine and red oak trees up to 30" in diameter. Another interesting feature of the forest are the numerous “cradle and pillow” features. These form when trees are toppled and their roots rip out of the ground creating a cradle (a pit), and as the tipped-up roots decay over many decades, they drop the soil they excavated creating a pillow (a mound), adjacent to the cradle. When these structures are common, you know that canopy disturbance (wind throw and other) has been continuous.

When these features are everywhere and suggest the trees have fallen in multiple directions, it can take centuries to create this type of forest floor texture. If you look closely at the property, the forest floor is riddled with these structures, indicating a very old forest.

So far, we have identified 60 different species of plants on the property. In addition to the 16 species of trees, there are seven species of shrubs, 27 species of herbaceous forbs, five sedge and grass species, and five fern species. Some of the more unique plants include the Indian cucumber root, beech-drops, and squawroot, all of which are most often found in only high-quality natural areas. Unfortunately, the herbaceous ground cover is not real abundant, which is often common in closed canopy forests, but also a likely result of deer browsing.

In the spring time, the woods are alive with songbirds. In 2020, we recorded 38 species of birds utilizing the property for breeding habitat. The dense canopy cover offers critical habitat to forest-interior nesting bird species such as the ovenbird, black-throated green warbler, scarlet tanager, wood thrush, Acadian flycatcher, and many others. Six species of woodpeckers have also been identified and utilize the abundance of snag and cavity trees in which to raise their young.

We invite all nature lovers to visit the Preserve and walk the 1.5-mile trail loop. If you would like to know more about the property consider joining forester Rod Denning on June 12th as we explore the property.



# Forestry Assistance Program Report

2020 marked the eighth year that the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has funded a District Forester in the Oceana Conservation District office to work with Michigan's Forestry Assistance Program. In fiscal year 2020, 145 people contacted the District Forester. As a result, District Forester Rod Denning provided 85 site visits covering 2,625 acres throughout the three-county service area (Oceana, Newaygo, and Muskegon).

The Forestry Assistance Program provides landowners a free site visit, assistance, and recommendations about forestry-related topics. Questions such as: What is the status of my woodlot? Is it a good time to harvest trees? Do I have good habitat for deer? What kind of state/federal programs can I utilize? Do I have any insect and disease issues in my woodlot? These questions and many others can be answered with the help of your District Forester.

A major focus of the program is to promote the Qualified Forest Program (QFP). In fiscal year 2020, twenty-two landowners were eligible for the QFP totaling 4.3 square miles of property. The program provides a property tax exemption for private landowners who actively manage their woodlots for the production of forest products.

The goal of the program is to promote sustainable forest stewardship practices and to provide forest products to Michigan's forest products industry.

The Forestry Assistance Program also provides a referral service to help landowners connect with private consulting foresters to write a Forest Stewardship Plan, apply to the Qualified Forest Program, or to administer a timber sale. Overall, 61 referral contacts resulted from this process in FY 2020. To help evaluate how effective Michigan's Forestry Assistance Program is, District Foresters are asked to estimate the economic value of referral activities. For our Region 15 service area, the results included 19 forest management plans referred to private consultants resulting in an estimated \$36,000 of economic activity. Also, 11 timber harvests were referred for administration covering 548 acres with the potential to yield approximately \$212,000 worth of forest products.

Site visits and QFP verifications were down 18% and 48% respectively this year compared to last, most likely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Outreach and education are also an important part of the District Forester's role. An in-person workshop "Managing your Forests for Wildlife" was held at the Hes-

peria Community Library and we reached out to attendees of the Huntin' Time Expo in Grand Rapids. Among other local press releases, an article entitled "Hemlock Woolly Adelgid in Michigan – The Battle Has Begun" was published in the Michigan Forest Magazine – a publication of the Michigan Forest Association.

Aside from grant-funded work, Rod Denning was also able to spend a significant amount of time in 2020 conducting a site assessment and a developing a Forest Stewardship Plan for the Oceana Conservation District's newly acquired Otto Nature Preserve, an 80-acre parcel of northern mesic forest dominated by mature beech, maple, oak and hemlock. The results of the assessment and the completed Forest Stewardship Plan is posted on our website.

Rod also took the lead on a large tree-planting effort along the Hart-Montague Trail in coordination with the Delta Institute and the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission. Tree planting started in 2020 and will continue in 2021. In total, 700 trees will be planted.

If you're a forest landowner and are interested in services that the Forestry Assistance Program offers, please contact District Forester, Rod Denning at (616) 920-9775, or rod.denning@macd.org.

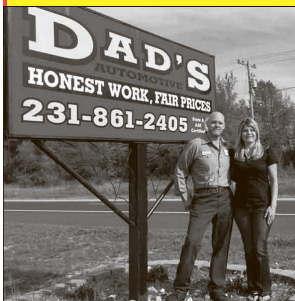


• Contributed photo

Red pine being thinned during a timber harvest in Oceana County.

## DAD'S AUTOMOTIVE LLC

HONEST WORK • FAIR PRICES



Dad's Automotive has been in business since May 2007, locally and family owned and operated. Charlie and Tara believe in honest work at a fair price. We pride ourselves in continuing to provide excellent service that many in the area have come to expect from Dad's Automotive. We are a full service automotive repair shop

**SPECIALIZING IN:**

**Tires • Computer Diagnostics**  
**Brakes • Heating & Air Conditioning**  
**Steering & Suspension • Engine Repair**  
**Tune-Up & Performance • Electrical & Accessories**  
**Oil Changes • Preventative Maintenance**

**COMPLETE AUTOMOTIVE CENTER**  
 SERVICING BOTH FOREIGN & DOMESTIC VEHICLES

Charlie Mero, Owner  
 State & Master ASE Certified  
**3505 S. Oceana Dr., New Era**  
**(231) 861-2405**

BETWEEN SHELBY & NEW ERA

**"TRUST OUR FAMILY TO TAKE CARE OF YOURS"**

## ADAMS Heating & Cooling II, LLC

2790 W. Tyler Rd. Hart, MI  
 231-873-2665 • 888-361-9722  
[www.adamsheatingcooling.com](http://www.adamsheatingcooling.com)

*We are proud to salute the local farmers & their efforts to preserve our land!*

**26% THROUGH 2021 FEDERAL TAX INCENTIVES AVAILABLE**

SMARTER FROM THE GROUND UP™

**WaterFurnace** Smarter from the Ground Up™

# Invasive Species Report



Oceana County is one of seven counties of the West Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (West Michigan CISMA). Numerous agencies and organizations, including conservation districts in these counties, serve as partners and work together to obtain grants for the management of invasive species. An invasive species has been defined by the state as a non-native species whose introduction causes harm, or is likely to cause harm to Michigan's economy, environment or human health.

Many non-native species in Michigan, including fruits, vegetables, field crops, livestock and domestic animals, are important to our economy and lifestyle. Most non-native species are not harmful and may provide economic benefits. Invasive species cause harm when they out-compete native species by reproducing and spreading rapidly in areas where they have no natural predators and change the balance of the ecosystems we rely on.

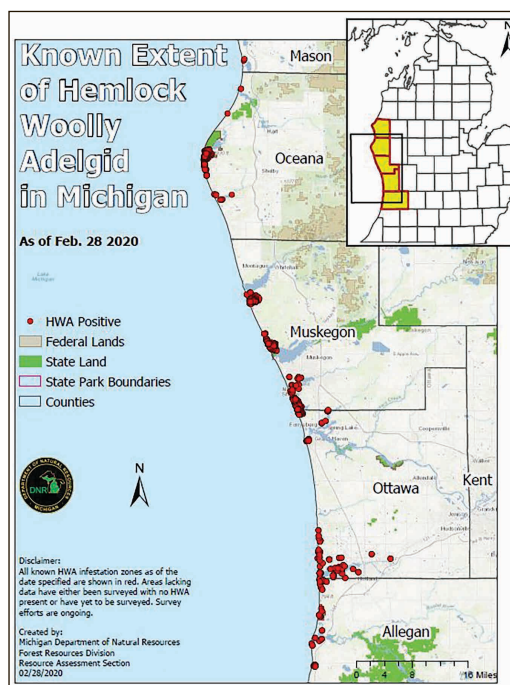
Oceana Conservation District works closely with Ottawa Conservation District and Muskegon Conservation District to implement invasive species treatments in Oceana County. Target species in Oceana County currently include Japanese Knotweed, Phragmites, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and European Frogbit.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, state budget deficits in 2020 led to a freeze in grant funds from the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program from March through July causing invasive species management work in Oceana County to get off to a very uncertain and slow start. When grant funds became available again in August, partnering organizations were forced to re-prioritize plans for 2020 which resulted in minimal efforts to manage Phragmites and Japanese Knotweed, two terrestrial species found in wet areas near lakes and rivers and in ditches. Plans and funds are in place to ramp up efforts in 2021.



## Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Update

Treatment and survey work for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), a forest pest that is affecting Eastern Hemlocks in West Michigan, was also severely impacted in 2020. In addition to a freeze in grant funding, new infestations were detected in Mason County which pulled CISMA work crews up north and resulted in a significant decrease in treatment effort in Oceana County. A total of 6,487 hemlock trees were treated in 2020 compared to 15,865 trees in 2019. Crews are active this winter surveying for HWA and we hope to regain some ground in 2021.



Known infestations of HWA has recently been extended as far north as Ludington State Park in Mason County.

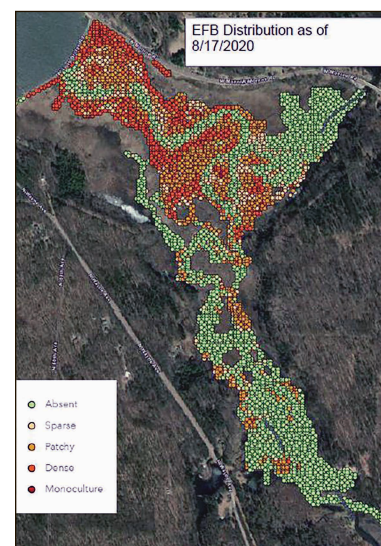
Hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) secrete white cottony clumps as they feed on sap from hemlock trees. HWA can kill needles, shoots and branches. Over time, growth slows as trees become less vigorous and trees may take on a grayish-green appearance.

## European Frog-bit update

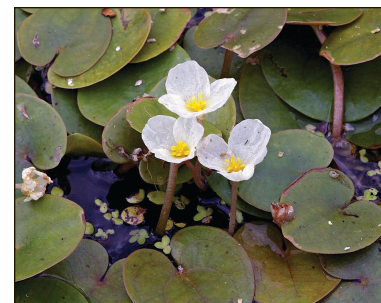
Collaborative efforts began in 2020 to manage European frog-bit, an aquatic invasive species that was first detected in Pentwater Lake in 2019. In coordination with the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, the Gun Lake Tribe, and the West Michigan CISMA, surveys were completed to determine how widespread the infestation was in the Pentwater River Watershed. Unfortunately, additional sites were found upstream in 2020. After surveys were completed, the Pentwater Lake Association installed a floating boom on the bridge at Longbridge Road to capture as much material from the floating mat as possible before entering Pentwater Lake. Plans are in place to continue the survey and management of European frog-bit in 2021.

Survey and Treatment work conducted in 2020 include:

- Japanese Knotweed: 3 sites, 0.25 acres treated
- Phragmites: 1 site, 0.1 acres treated
- Various invasive species on U.S. Forest Service land: 51 sites, 64 acres treated
- Hemlock Woolly Adelgid: 55 sites, 6,487 trees treated on 626 acres
- European Frog-bit: Pentwater River and Lake surveyed; boom installed



Extent of European frog-bit in the Pentwater River and marsh.



A native of Europe and parts of Africa and Asia, European frog-bit is an aquatic plant with small, heart-shaped leaves. Unlike similar aquatic plants, European frog-bit does not anchor its roots in the lake or stream bed but remains free-floating. Resembling small lily pads, three-petaled white flowers with yellow centers appear briefly between mid-July and mid-August. The plant quickly forms dense colonies or mats that prevent native plant growth, make movement difficult for ducks and large fish, and cause problems for boaters, anglers and swimmers.



Brandon Macher • Contributed photo

Aerial view of European frog-bit in the Pentwater marsh.



## 2021 TREE SALE ORDER FORM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Please provide an email address so we can send updates and a reminder**

Office Use Only		
Order #		
Date Rec'd		
CK#		
Cash	Card	Online
Received by:		
Processed in QB:		

CONIFER SEEDLINGS	AGE	SIZE	50	100	500	1000	QTY	TOTAL
Fir, Concolor	2-0	6-12"	\$37	\$66	\$289	\$495		\$
Fir, Frasier	3-0	6-12"	\$42	\$74	\$324	\$555		\$
Pine, Jack	2-0	6-12"	\$23	\$40	\$175	\$300		\$
Pine, Red	2-0	6-12"	\$23	\$40	\$175	\$300		\$
Pine, White	2-0	6-12"	\$25	\$44	\$193	\$330		\$
Spruce, Norway	2-0	6-12"	\$24	\$42	\$184	\$315		\$
Spruce, White	2-0	6-12"	\$23	\$40	\$175	\$300		\$

CONIFER TRANSPLANTS	AGE	SIZE	10	25	50	100	QTY	TOTAL
Cedar, White	2-1	18-24"	\$25	\$55	\$96	\$165		\$
Pine, White	2-1	9-12"	\$16	\$36	\$63	\$108		\$
Spruce, Blue	2-2	18-24"	\$26	\$57	\$100	\$171		\$
Spruce, Norway	2-1	12-24"	\$16	\$36	\$63	\$108		\$
Spruce, White	2-2	18-24"	\$24	\$54	\$95	\$162		\$

DECIDUOUS TREES	AGE	SIZE	10	25	50	100	QTY	TOTAL
Aspen, Quaking	2-0	24-36"	\$36	\$81	\$141	\$242		\$
Birch, White	1-0	18-24"	\$18	\$40	\$69	\$119		\$
Cherry, Black	1-0	18-24"	\$17	\$37	\$65	\$111		\$
Chestnut, American	2-0	18-24"	\$41	\$90	\$158	\$270		\$
Maple, Red	2-0	24-36"	\$29	\$65	\$114	\$195		\$
Maple, Sugar	2-0	18-24"	\$20	\$44	\$77	\$132		\$
Oak, White	2-0	18-24"	\$21	\$46	\$81	\$138		\$
Tamarack (Eastern Larch)	2-0	18-24"	\$32	\$70	\$123	\$210		\$
Walnut, Black	2-0	24-36"	\$33	\$73	\$128	\$219		\$

SMALL TREES & SHRUBS	AGE	SIZE	10	25	50	100	QTY	TOTAL
Cranberry, Highbush	2-0	18-24"	\$23	\$50	\$88	\$150		\$
Dogwood, Flowering	2-0	24-36"	\$29	\$65	\$114	\$195		\$
Elderberry, Common	2-0	24-36"	\$39	\$87	\$151	\$260		\$
Hazelnut, American	1-0	18-24"	\$22	\$49	\$85	\$146		\$
Holly, Winterberry	3-0	18-24"	\$26	\$58	\$102	\$174		\$
Nannyberry	2-0	18-24"	\$36	\$81	\$142	\$243		\$
Plum, American	1-0	18-24"	\$18	\$41	\$71	\$122		\$
Redbud, Eastern	2-0	24-36"	\$33	\$73	\$128	\$219		\$
Sand Cherry 	1-0	18-24"	\$20	\$45	\$79	\$135		\$
Serviceberry, Alleghany	2-0	18-24"	\$24	\$53	\$93	\$159		\$


### TO PLACE AN ORDER:

**Complete this form and mail with payment to:**

Oceana Conservation District  
1064 Industrial Park Dr.  
Shelby, MI 49455

**Or, order online by visiting our website:**

[www.OceanaConservation.org](http://www.OceanaConservation.org)

FRUIT TREES	Price/Ea	QTY	TOTAL
Apple, Crimson Crisp	\$24		\$
Apple, Liberty	\$20		\$
Apple, Enterprise	\$20		\$
Apple, Goldrush	\$20		\$
Cherry, Lapins	\$24		\$
Pear, Seckel 	\$24		\$

BERRIES & GRAPES	Price/Ea	QTY	TOTAL
Raspberry, Latham	\$4		\$
Strawberry, Allstar (bundle of 5)	\$4		\$
Grape, Concord	\$10		\$

DUNE GRASS	Price/Ea	QTY	TOTAL
Bundle of 100 sprigs	\$25		\$
Bundle of 500 sprigs	\$125		\$
Bundle of 1,000 sprigs	\$250		\$

ADDITIONAL ITEMS	Price/Ea	QTY	TOTAL
Planting Bar/Dibble	\$25		\$
5' Miracle Tree Tubes w/ stakes (5) *	\$32		\$
40" Tree Guard (for fruit trees)	\$2		\$
"Trees Planted" Sign	\$2		\$
Tree Mat (3'x3' weed blocker)	\$1.50		\$
Wire Stake Flags (100)	\$20		\$
Terra-Sorb Absorbant Planting Gel	\$2		\$
Mosquito Barrier (quart)	\$29.95		\$
Plantskydd Deer/Rabbit Repellant			\$
Ready-to-use Quart	\$21.95		\$
Granular (repels mice & rabbits only)	\$9.95		\$

\*Miracle Tree Tubes only suitable for deciduous trees, come in bundles of 5

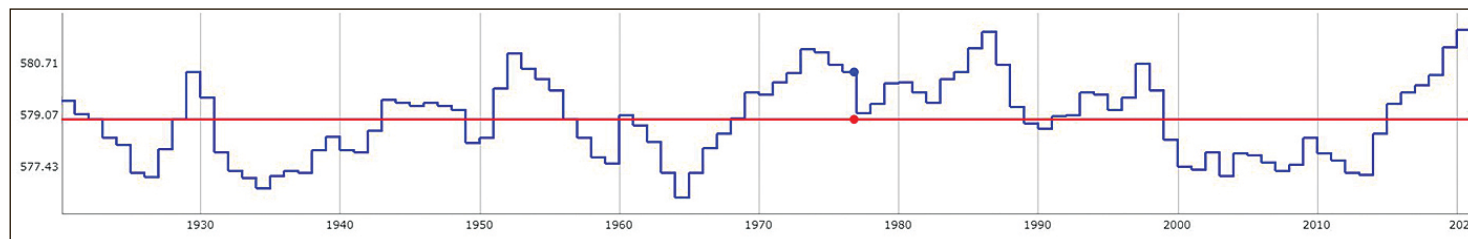
Subtotal	
6% Sales Tax	
Charitable Donation	
<b>TOTAL DUE</b>	

**ORDERS DUE:** March 19, 2021  
**PICK UP DATE:** April 17, 2021  
**PICK UP LOCATION:** Oceana Co Fairgrounds

Orders will be filled on a first-come/first-serve basis. We will not be responsible for trees not picked up on the assigned date and are not liable for survival after pick up. All sales are final. Thank you for your order!

**For more information:** (231) 861-5600

# Record high lake levels wreak havoc on the Lake Michigan shoreline



Lake Michigan annual water levels, 1920-2020. The red line demonstrates the long-term average. Data obtained from the NOAA Great Lakes Dashboard.

## Contributed by Jim Nicholas

Whether you live in Oceana County or visit regularly, you are likely aware that Lake Michigan water levels are very high which has caused widespread damage along the shoreline. Let's take a look at how the water levels compare to historical records, what causes water levels to fluctuate, and how the high waters have impacted Oceana County. Later, we'll let you know how the Oceana Conservation District can help the effort to restore the shoreline.

Lake Michigan water levels have been recorded since the late 1800's. Lake Michigan's all-time high-water record occurred in October, 1986. Although not exceeding that record, Lake Michigan water levels were the highest ever recorded for each of the months from January through August of 2020.

Water levels are determined mostly by the difference between evaporation from Lake Michigan (which occurs mostly in the winter) and precipitation into the lake and its watershed. When evaporation and precipitation are nearly equal, the lake level doesn't change much. The last 50 years have shown a trending increase in both evaporation and precipitation, but 2014 was a different story. That winter, 93 percent of Lake Michigan was covered with ice. This record ice cover prevented water from evaporating over the winter, though precipitation remained high.

Water levels surged upward the following summer from near-record lows. Additional years of ice cover coupled with high precipitation have caused water levels to continue to climb. Inflows from Lake Superior and outflows to Lake Erie also affect water levels. The historical range in water levels is about six feet.

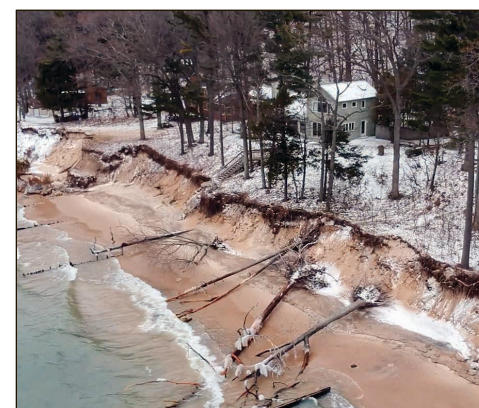
The US Army Corps of Engineers projects that high water levels will persist for at least the next six months. Long-term projections by various scientists conclude that water levels will stay within their historical six-foot range over the next decade, however, these projections indicate that extreme fluctuations in water levels may be more rapid. The decrease in water levels in the late 1990s and the recent increase in water levels are the two fastest water-level changes in the historical record. Also of note, the low water level period from 2000 to 2012 is the longest low water period on record.

Local residents and shoreline property owners in Oceana County surely felt the impacts. Road closures occurred in Pentwater, disrupting traffic in and out of the village and negatively impacting local businesses. Property owners spent millions of dollars moving cottages or installing boulders to protect their shoreline. Beaches were littered with large trees, lumber from decks and staircases, and other debris that has been thrown in the lake or uncovered by beach ero-

sion. There was virtually no beach along most of the shoreline.

Due to the impending crisis, the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) expedited shoreline erosion permits for homes and structures threatened by high water levels in 2020. The Department also launched a new webpage, [Michigan.gov/HighWater](http://Michigan.gov/HighWater), which includes helpful information about best practices for protecting the shoreline and specifics about obtaining a permit to perform work along the lakeshore. The webpage includes a list of contractors that implement natural shoreline treatments such as rock revetments and plantings. EGLE staff are likely to adjust plans if a permit application includes plans to install a seawall or other hard structure if other natural shoreline treatments are an option. Seawalls not only disrupt the natural transition of open water to dune causing negative effects on coastal habitats and wildlife, they also can cause blowouts, worsening the erosion problem in adjacent areas along the shoreline.

Planting native dune grass is the most effective way to stabilize open dunes. For this purpose, the Oceana Conservation District distributed 129,000 dune grass culms to landowners in 2020 through the semi-annual dune grass sale. Prior to 2019, the average number of plugs was 24,000. This is one record worth breaking.



## JARVIS SAWMILL, INC.

*Buyer of Standing Timber*

Seller of Lumber - Sawdust - Bark - Pallets • S.F.I. Certified  
1570 S. 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue • Shelby, Michigan • BOB MAYO, President  
**(231) 861-2078 or (231) 742-1000**  
[www.jarvissawmill.com](http://www.jarvissawmill.com)



## Ken Adams & Sons Excavating

- Hydraulic & Mechanical Dredging, Hauling & Disposal
- Excavating
- Steel, Rock & Vinyl Wall Installation & Repair
- Gravel Crushing
- Septic Systems
- Farm Agriculture Lime
- Dump or Spread
- Ditching
- Manuer Pit Digging
- Trenching & Piping
- Site Prep for new Buildings
- Shoreline Protection
- Heil Coils Installed
- Diesel Pile Driver
- 30 Ton Hydraulic Truck Crane

**Let's Get R Done**

**Pentwater, MI 231-869-5928**

# Education Report

Our year of conservation education started out with a hoot! We held the Full-Moon Owl Prowl in February, gathering a group of over 50 expectant participants. Held at the Crystal Valley cross-country ski trails, this was a fun two hours learning about our Michigan owl species with visual and hands-on materials, followed by a guided walk in the woods. We hiked the trails under the light of the moon and called to the local species. It was a perfect night for a hike, capped with hot chocolate back at the base.

Then came COVID-19 and our educational programming came to a screeching halt. We were unable to host some of our favorite educational programming including the sixth-grade field trip to Gales Pond, and our Nature Ranger Day Camp for children. Many other programs were similarly canceled.

Given the nature of the activities, our birding and wildflower hikes proceeded as planned. In the spring we hosted our wildflower walk. The spring ephemerals are a joy to find as they bloom for very short periods of times in the season.

Spring is also the perfect time to view migratory birds. Some bird species are returning to their breeding grounds here in Oceana County. Other species are passing through on their journey farther north. In May, we followed the trail in the Pentwater State Game Area that leads to the Pentwater River. Along the way, we

identified 33 species of birds. Within the wooded area we spotted such beauties as the scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, and indigo bunting. We also saw warblers flitting around and foraging, utilizing the habitat as one of their migratory stopovers. Along the bluff of the Pentwater River, we saw riparian bird species such as the Belted Kingfisher and Great Blue Heron. Though our goal was to enjoy the birds in our area, we also had fun watching muskrats building their homes in the river. In late summer we watched the migratory shore birds stopping along the waterways on their journey to warmer destinations. We encountered several species of waterfowl, sandpipers, and plovers at Charles Mears State Park and at the Hart BioPure Facility. Our birding trips are always well-attended and entertaining!

We plan to open our education program to more activities this year, and to utilize the Otto Nature Preserve as an education destination. Aside from our popular birding and wildflower programs, we hope to expand programming to preschool-aged children and to hold three week-long day camps in the summer to highlight resources in Oceana County including wetlands, agriculture and forestry. Feel free to let us know what activities may interest you in future years.



## Meet Kari Wilson!

Kari Wilson is a seasoned educator with a passion for guiding children to form deep connections with nature. Teacher Kiki, as she is known to her students, has Master's degrees in education and photography and is currently completing certification in Forest School teaching. An avid outdoors enthusiast, Kari, her husband and their dog Binky can often be spotted hiking, biking or skiing along Oceana County's stunning trails and beaches.

Kari has recently joined our staff and will be launching a nature-based preschool program and helping to expand our summer day camp program.

# 2021 programs and events

<b>Feb. 24</b> 7 – 8 p.m.	<b>Forest Health Webinar</b> Visit <a href="https://OceanaConservation.org">OceanaConservation.org</a> for link	<b>June 21–25</b> 9 a.m. – Noon	<b>Day Ca.m.p: On the Farm</b> Details TBD
<b>Feb. 27</b> 7 – 8:30 p.m.	<b>Owl Prowl</b> Otto Nature Preserve · Shelby	<b>July 8</b> 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.	<b>Nitrate Screening</b> Oceana Conservation District · Shelby
<b>Mar. 1</b> 5 p.m.	<b>Scholarship Applications Due</b> Mail or email application to Suzie Knoll	<b>July 12-16</b> 9 a.m. – Noon	<b>Day Ca.m.p: In the Forest</b> Otto Nature Preserve · Shelby
<b>Mar. 3</b> 9 – 11:30 a.m.	<b>Sustainable Farming Webinar</b> Visit <a href="https://OceanaConservation.org">OceanaConservation.org</a> for link	<b>July 20</b> 8 – 10 a.m.	<b>Highway Clean Up</b> US 31/Polk Rd · Hart
<b>Mar.ch 19</b> 5 p.m.	<b>Tree Sale Orders Due</b> Mail in order form or order online	<b>Aug. 7</b> 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.	<b>Butterfly ID Workshop</b> Location TBD
<b>Mar.ch 24</b> 7 – 8 p.m.	<b>Forestry Assistance Webinar</b> Visit <a href="https://OceanaConservation.org">OceanaConservation.org</a> for link	<b>Date TBD</b> 4 – 8 p.m.	<b>Farming for the Future Field Day</b> West Michigan Research Station · Hart
<b>April 17</b> 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.	<b>Tree Pickup &amp; Election</b> Oceana County Fairgrounds · Hart	<b>Aug. 21</b> 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.	<b>Hazardous Waste Collection</b> Hart Dept. of Public Works · Hart
<b>April 20</b> 9 – 11 a.m.	<b>Highway Clean Up</b> US 31/Polk Rd · Hart	<b>Aug. 23-27</b> 9 a.m. – Noon	<b>Day Ca.m.p: At the Pond</b> Gales Pond County Park · Hart
<b>April 22</b> 9 a.m. – Noon	<b>Volunteer Work Day @ ONP</b> Otto Nature Preserve	<b>Sept. 11</b> 9 a.m. – Noon	<b>Beach Cleanup</b> Various Locations · Oceana County
<b>May 7</b> 1 – 2 p.m.	<b>Wildflower Walk</b> Nicholas residence · Shelby	<b>Sept. 15</b> 7 – 8:30 p.m.	<b>Timber Tax Workshop</b> Hart Community Center · Hart
<b>May 14</b> 8 – 10 a.m.	<b>Birding Field Trip</b> Silver Lake State Park · Mears	<b>Sept. 17</b> 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.	<b>Dune Grass Sale (pre-orders required)</b> Oceana Conservation District · Shelby
<b>May 22</b> 8 – 10 a.m.	<b>Birding Field Trip</b> Otto Nature Preserve · Shelby	<b>Sept. 18</b> 9 a.m. – Noon	<b>Mushroom ID Workshop</b> Hart Comm. Center, Otto Nature Preserve
<b>May 28</b> 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.	<b>Native Plant Sale</b> Oceana Conservation District · Shelby	<b>Sept. 28</b> 9 – 11 a.m.	<b>Highway Clean Up</b> US 31/Polk Rd · Hart
<b>June 12</b> 10 a.m. – Noon	<b>Guided Hike with Forester</b> Otto Nature Preserve · Shelby	<b>Oct. 16</b> 1 – 3 p.m.	<b>Fall Colors Bike Tour</b> Hart Montague Bike Trail · Hart
<b>June 19</b> 9 a.m. – Noon	<b>Scrap Tire Collection</b> Location TBD	<b>Dec. 15</b> 8 a.m. – Noon	<b>Christmas Bird Count</b> Pentwater, Hart, Mears, Shelby

## Six scholarships awarded to local students

Oceana Conservation District awarded scholarships to six local high school graduates in 2020. Brenna Aerts from Hart High School, Ayden Beachum from Hart High School, Nicole Isley from Shelby High School, Star Jewell from Hart High School, Hunter Tubbs from Hart High School, and Emma Woller from Montague High School received \$1,000 awards to help launch their post-secondary education.

Oceana Conservation District awards scholarships to Oceana County residents who plan to pursue a degree in natural resources, conservation, or agriculture and demonstrate the potential to be active community leaders. Oceana Conservation District established the Munger Scholarship Program in 2017 with the support of three generous donors and the White River Watershed Partnership. We are looking for more individuals, businesses, and organizations who would also like to contribute to the fund, ideally on an annual basis. For more information, visit [www.OceanaConservation.org](https://www.OceanaConservation.org) or contact Suzie Knoll via email: [suzie.knoll@macd.org](mailto:suzie.knoll@macd.org).

# Recent studies show staggering loss of birds since 1970

Thinking back to your youth, it may not surprise you to learn that bird populations are declining, but the sheer number of birds lost is staggering. Two recent studies showed that the population of birds in North America has declined by almost three billion since 1970 (yes, that's billion with a 'b'). That means that there are almost 30 percent less birds now than there were 50 years ago.

Some of the most common birds have shown the largest declines. Backyard birds such as Blue Jays, Baltimore Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Dark-eyed Juncos, and even the abundant Red-winged Blackbird have all declined by 25 to 30 percent. Forest birds have declined by 17 percent overall, but some woodland species like the Wood Thrush have declined by as much as 60 percent. Aerial insectivores including swallows, swifts and Whip-poor-wills have seen a 32 percent population loss. And grassland birds have seen the greatest decline, suffering a 53 percent population loss since 1970.

The primary reason for the decline in bird populations is habitat loss. For instance, grassland birds have declined more than any other group of birds due to urban sprawl and unsustainable agricultural practices such as overgrazing. Birds are also vulnerable to a variety of other threats including deforestation, the use of pesticides, a decrease in insects, and climate change.

If global temperatures rise even a few degrees, breeding and wintering ranges will be significantly impacted by frequency of droughts, fires, intense storms, and changes in lake levels. There are reasons for hope.



Gary Mueller • Macaulay Library at Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Baltimore Oriole

Raptors such as Bald Eagles, Osprey, and Peregrine Falcons made successful come-backs after pesticide management and concerted conservation efforts. The Kirtland's Warbler that breeds almost exclusively in Michigan came back from the brink of extinction by managing their breeding habitat. The number of woodpeckers, including the Pileated Woodpecker that was nearly extirpated, has increased due to better forest management practices including retaining snags for nesting sites.

Waterfowl populations have increased by 35 million birds thanks to duck hunters and conservation groups.

Not many of us have the opportunity to assist with large-scale conservation efforts, but each one of us can make a difference by supporting conservation organizations and acting locally. Below are seven simple things you can do to help birds.

• Contribute to citizen science. Consider

participating in annual bird counts such as the Great Backyard Bird Count in February, the Global Big Day in May, and the Christmas Bird Count in December. Conduct breeding bird surveys or donate to an Adopt-a-Nest program for species at risk.

• Participate in stewardship activities. The Department of Natural Resources, land conservancies and your local conservation district offer volunteer work days with opportunities to enhance habitat.

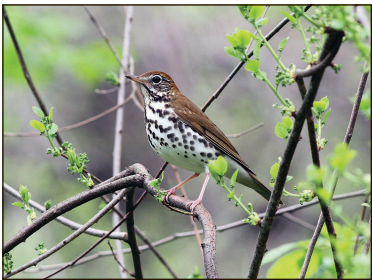
• Install window fixtures or decals to limit the number of window collisions. Check out CollidEscape, Feather Friendly, or Acopian Bird Savers for ideas.

• Keep cats inside. Predation by domestic cats is one of the biggest human-caused threats to birds.

• Drink shade-grown coffee. Shade-grown coffee requires little or no chemical fertilizers or pesticides. The shade trees filter carbon dioxide, aid in moisture retention, minimize erosion and provide critical habitat for birds.

• Plant native plants. Acreage converted to native plants creates breeding habitat for birds and provides seed and insects during migration.

• Educate yourself and others. Check out Audubon for Kids or the DNR Classroom for educational activities and curriculum.



Michael Parr • American Bird Conservancy

Wood Thrush

## Your Local Asparagus Cart Outfitter

Large inventory of asparagus picker parts

We have everything from engines to transaxles  
and batteries to bearings!



**KLOTZ AUTO of Hart & Shelby**

4227 Tyler Rd., Hart • 873-3325 • 10 N. State St., Shelby • 861-6191

GOOD BUSINESS SENSE,  
STRONG LOCAL ROOTS,  
AND AN ON-GOING COMMITMENT  
TO OCEANA COUNTY AGRICULTURE.



**SSB | Shelby State Bank**

Where Banking is Still a People Business!



[www.shelbybank.com](http://www.shelbybank.com)

Member FDIC

# Oceana Conservation District

## Board of Directors



**Eric Herrygers**  
Chair



**Garry McKeen**  
Vice Chair



**Kathy Carter**  
Secretary/Treasurer

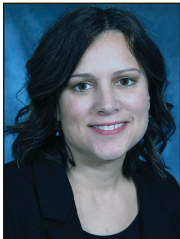


**Joseph Klimovitz**  
Board Member



**Timothy Vinke**  
Board Member

## Staff



**Suzie Knoll**  
Executive Director



**Adam Chandler**  
Conservation Technician



**Rod Denning**  
Forester



**Lynda Herremans**  
MAEAP Technician



**Kari Wilson**  
Educator



**Rebecca Miller**  
Education/Stewardship  
Coordinator



**Mark Kelly**  
USDA-NRCS  
District Conservationist



**Drew Raynor**  
Invasive Species Coord., W. Mich.  
Cooperative Invasive Species  
Management Area



**Jordan DeVries**  
Produce Safety  
Technician

## Partners

# 2020 MAEAP Report



MAEAP's comprehensive, voluntary, proactive program is designed to reduce farmers' legal and environmental risks through a three-phase process:

- Education
- Farm assessment and practice implementation
- On-farm verification that ensures the farmer has implemented environmentally-sound practices

Sixteen farms successfully completed all phases during the past year adding seven new verifications and 22 re-verifications. Oceana County boasts a total number of 152 verifications on 82 farms in good standing. Check out the table showing this year's verifications.

Several other farms received assistance related to emergency farm planning, drift management, water use reporting, no-till drill use, spill kits, pesticide jug recycling, pesticide license credits, and more by the MAEAP Technician.

Since the first phase of the program is education, much effort goes into providing educational opportunities to growers and highlighting the program. This past year due to COVID 19, many of the formal outreach

activities were cancelled but the Oceana MAEAP Technician was still able to accomplish the following:

- MAEAP booth at the Great Lakes Expo
- MAEAP Phase I/Grower's Meeting in Scottville for Mason, Lake, Oceana & Manistee growers
- Asparagus Day - MAEAP presentation and display
- Provided a free nitrate screening for Oceana County residents - 32 wells
- Well water sampling for pesticides on 9 wells
- Coordinated the collection and recycling of 6850 agricultural containers
- Distributed \$3,000 in cost-share funds to farmers implementing stewardship practices that help move them towards MAEAP Verification

An annual Farm Field Day is planned to be held in August so watch for details! Also, be sure to check out the Oceana Conservation District on Facebook featuring some of our MAEAP verified farms. For those wishing to get started with the MAEAP verification process, please contact Lynda Herremans at (231) 861-5600 x 3006.

## 7 New and 22 Re-verifications in FY 2020

### Benona Township

Garry McKeen Forest  
Verified: Forest, Wetlands & Habitat

NJ Fox & Sons- 3 separate farms  
Verified/Re-verified: Farmstead & Cropping

Rabe Orchards  
Re-verified: Cropping

Claybanks Township  
Tuck Away Acres  
Verified: Farmstead & Cropping

Elbridge Township  
Shull Farms  
Verified: Farmstead  
Re-verified: Cropping

Todd Greiner Packing - 136th Ave.  
Re-verified: Farmstead & Cropping

Golden Township  
John R. Williams Farm  
Re-verified: Farmstead & Cropping

Pentwater Township  
Pentwater State Game Area  
Verified: Forest, Wetlands & Habitat

Shelby Township  
Better View Farm  
Re-verified: Farmstead & Cropping

Lound Farms  
Re-verified: Farmstead & Cropping

NJ Fox & Sons- Aebig Apple  
Re-verified: Farmstead & Cropping

Tad Aebig Farm  
Re-verified: Farmstead & Cropping

Weare Township  
Greiner's Rainbow Acres  
Re-verified: Farmstead & Cropping

Todd Greiner Packing - Jackson Rd.  
Re-verified: Farmstead & Cropping



## 2020 Financial Report

October 1, 2019—September 30, 2020

**BEGINNING BALANCE** ..... \$378,652  
(Adjusted by auditor to include 2019 land donation)

### REVENUES

State Grants ..... \$220,510  
Local Funding & Grants ..... \$28,750  
Charge for Services ..... \$9,760  
Sale of Goods ..... \$75,202  
Rentals & Interest ..... \$5,924  
Donations ..... \$27,279  
Other Revenue ..... \$66,022  
**TOTAL REVENUES** ..... **\$433,447**

### EXPENDITURES

District Operations ..... \$330,947  
Plant Materials ..... \$41,330  
Education/Outreach..... \$11,386  
Recycling Programs ..... \$2,351  
Scholarship Program ..... \$11,000  
**TOTAL EXPENDITURES** ..... **\$397,014**

**CONTRIBUTION TO FUND BALANCE** ..... **\$36,433**

**ENDING BALANCE** ..... **\$415,085**

## Quality Water Systems a must for Quality Farm Products

Please pray for our Farmers, the Grass Roots of Our Country

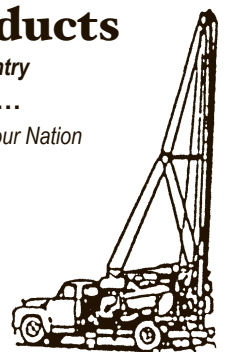
We support your efforts to preserve our land...

Please pray for the President, leaders, soldiers and to keep God in our Nation



"Now 75 Years and Four Generations"

873-2317 • [www.walkervillewelldrilling.com](http://www.walkervillewelldrilling.com)



# Natural Resources Conservation District Report

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency in the United States Department of Agriculture, works with private landowners to install or implement conservation practices on their land. NRCS is an agency of resource professionals who partner and work directly with and through local conservation districts. NRCS's mission is to educate and assist landowners with installing conservation practices. NRCS has been working with farmers, ranchers, rural landowners and conservation districts since 1935.

In 2020, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contracted over \$279,000 to address natural resource concerns in

Oceana County. EQIP provided funding for seasonal high tunnels, cover crops, critical area plantings, nutrient management, prescribed grazing, windbreak establishment, grassed waterways, forest management plans, waste storage facilities and more. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracted over \$342,000 to landowners looking for additional opportunities to expand on existing conservation efforts. CSP provided funding for cover crops, conservation cover, pollinator and monarch habitat plantings, tree and shrub establishment, forest management, and more.

The Shelby USDA Service Center office looks forward to con-

tinuing to work with landowners on their agricultural and conservation goals. Call (231) 861-5600 for more information.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

## Farm Bill Programs

### Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, increased soil health and reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, improved or created wildlife habitat, and mitigation against increasing weather volatility.

### Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps you build on your existing conservation efforts while strengthening your operation. Whether you are looking to improve grazing conditions, increase crop resiliency, or develop wildlife habitat, we can custom design a CSP plan to help you meet those goals. We can help you identify natural resource problems in your operation and provide technical and financial assistance to solve those problems or attain higher stewardship levels in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner.

### Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The Conservation Reserve Program reduces soil erosion, protects the Nation's ability to produce food and fiber, reduces sedimentation in streams and lakes, improves water quality, establishes wildlife habitat, and enhances forest and wetland resources. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as tame or native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filterstrips, or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract. Cost sharing is provided to establish the vegetative cover practices.

### Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grasslands, and working farms and ranches through conservation easements. Under the Agricultural Land Easements component, NRCS helps American Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Under the Wetlands Reserve Easements component, NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands.

## NEAR FARM DRAINAGE, LLC

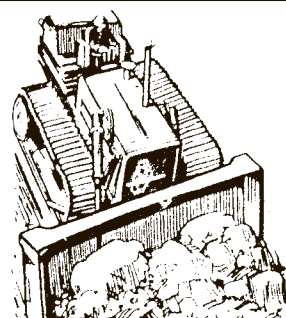
41 Years  
Experience



John Near  
231-730-2901  
231-861-4424

David Near  
231-730-2291

- Drain Tile Installation
- GPS Design System
- Excavator Work
- Dozer Work



## We Congratulate the Farmers of the Oceana Conservation District

... for their efforts to conserve, preserve and protect the land and water so it will continue to serve the needs of future generations.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work for the landowners along with the Oceana Conservation District in these conservation practices. We thank you for your patronage of the past and look forward to serving your conservation and other earth moving needs in the future.

RediMix • Bulldozing • Earthmoving • Sand  
Gravel • Black Dirt • Agricultural Lime

**BECKMAN BROTHERS, INC.**  
SHELBY • 861-2031

## COMPLETE COLLISION SERVICE

*Serving All Insurance Companies*

## MIKE'S AUTO BODY, LLC



*Proud to  
serve our local  
farmers!*

231-873-3041  
2656 Oceana Dr. - Hart

