



2022 Annual Report

LEELANAU CONSERVATION DISTRICT

"Promoting the wise use of our natural resources."



This year...

BUZZ LONG

What an exciting and interesting year for the Leelanau Conservation District! In August of 2021 we hired a new part-time employee, Collin Oosse, to assist our long-time soil erosion and sedimentation control (SESC) officer, Steve Christensen. Within a few months we realized we had hired a real gem. With his technology expertise we were able to improve our SESC program, purchasing new equipment and adopting an improved permitting system. Later that year, Aime Merizon, our communications specialist, left to take a full-time position closer to home. Collin was able to take over all communications responsibilities, glitch free. He was soon brought on as a full-time employee and he continues to amaze us with his abilities.

Next, Kama Ross, our forester for the past 8 years, decided to retire at the end of October 2021. We hired Ellie Johnson, a recent graduate from Clemson, to fill the role of Leelanau, Grand Traverse, and Benzie Counties' District Forester. She took the reins seamlessly and hit the ground running!

In her first year she was honored with the Technician of the Year award by the Conservation District Employees of Michigan at the recent Michigan Association of Conservation Districts conference. Way to go Ellie! Keep up the good work.



Ellie's award, featuring (left to right): Collin, Adam, Ellie, Karen, and Buzz

That same fall of 2021, the Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) technician serving Leelanau County out of the Grand Traverse District took a new position. This opened the possibility for Leelanau to become the fiduciary for the program that covered Leelanau and Benzie Counties, an opportunity we jumped on. After a fairly lengthy search we hired Adam Brown as the new MAEAP Technician. Adam, as with Ellie and Collin, got to work right away and has proved to be an excellent

employee. He is bringing the MAEAP program back to life in his service area. We look forward to even bigger and better things from Adam this coming year.

To make things even better, we were able to hold our 5th grade field day and an in-person Annual Meeting, Dinner and Election with 90 attendees learning about our programs and meeting our new staff.

All in all, a very productive year. We're hoping to make 2023 even better!

Buzz Long

Executive Director



Buzz and Tom at this year's Fall Conifer Sale

SEEDLING SALES

3 Native Seedling Sales

16,500 Native Plants Sold

305 Customers

\$16,204 in Profit



Karen keeping us organized (above) at the native plant sale last summer (below, left)



Students from St. Mary's School

5TH GRADE FIELD DAY

KAREN LONG

After two years of postponement, we were able to once again host the 5th graders from Leelanau County for a fun, fact-filled field trip. Nearly one hundred students from Suttons Bay, St. Mary's, Glen Lake, Leland and Northport schools, along with their teachers, gathered at Veronica Valley Park on the sunny morning of October 4th. We set up five different stations staffed by our Forester, MAEAP Tech, Soil Erosion Tech, Tree Specialist and the Invasive Species Network. The children had a wonderful time at each station showing great interest in what they were being taught. We ended the event with our famous hotdog lunch, I can honestly say I have never seen kids eat so many hotdogs! We are proud of our staff and especially proud of the students. It was a great experience for all and we look forward to hosting the 5th Grade Field Day again next Fall.

Heritage Apples

PORT ONEIDA

A historic farming community, Port Oneida remains as an example of what rural living in the northern lower peninsula used to be. With beautiful farmhouses, rolling fields, and long-lived orchards, the only thing missing from this pristine, preserved piece are the crops.

In an effort to revive the old ways, LCD and Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore have been working together to locate, graft, and plant antique apple varieties from Leelanau County in historic orchards. Well known apples, such as 'Northern Spy' or 'Wolf River' are grown with those rarely seen, like 'Ben Davis' (a very hard, small, apple good for shipping by train) or 'Chenango Strawberry' (which, yes, tastes like strawberries). Some apples found in the county weren't identifiable; their tags read 'Red, looks good/tastes good,' all to keep these cultivars from being forgotten.

The District hosts a pruning and grafting workshop at Port Oneida, where Steve, Tom, and others teach the community the art and benefits of such practices. We also set up a booth at the annual Port Oneida fair, where Collin described a few of the revived varieties and demonstrated the project's progression. Hopefully, in a few years, the trees will be far enough along that we'll be able to host pie making and cider pressing events. But until then, we're just happy to see these heritage apple trees kept around.



Photos, starting above and moving clockwise: cleft grafting demo; Collin explaining antique apple varieties; Steve discussing orchard tree pruning techniques; Matt Mohrman and Tom standing in front of the apple seedling nursery; Steve making some cuts to an overgrown apple tree; Tom grafting a new apple seedling for a crowd.



APPLE IDENTIFICATION

It seems that the district has started up a new service this year. More by demand than by design, we've become a resource for identifying apples. Antique varieties, modern cultivars, road-shoulder shoots, we're learning to see (and taste) the differences. It's been difficult - apples are incredibly diverse - but with help from Dave Hooper, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, the Kilchermans in Northport, and many more, we're getting better. If you've got an apple you'd like to know more about, let us know! Pictures, stories, or samples of leaves, flowers, or fruit (especially in pie form) are all useful in discovering what's growing. We'll do what we can to help.



The Crib, on our return trip from the island

A TRIP BACK IN TIME NORTH MANITOU

COLLIN OOSSE

Last fall, Tom Adams and I were invited to join the Leelanau Historical Society's tour of North Manitou. This would be my first time on the island. We taught grafting techniques, discussed apple identification, and shared the fruit's history on the island to over 50 attendees. Though I learned a ton that day, my most important lesson came that afternoon; taste-testing over 2 dozen apples, no matter how historic, makes for a rough ferry ride home. All the same, I'm very appreciative for the opportunity and can't wait to be back!



Tom relaxing in the shade of a large maple



Barn just north of the village



The village on North Manitou

Forestry Update

ELLIE JOHNSON

My first year as District Forester for Leelanau, Grand Traverse, and Benzie counties was full of collaboration and personal growth. I made connections with so many landowners, natural resource professionals, academics, and volunteers who are all equal parts motivated and curious on becoming better stewards for our region's forests. This year, I conducted **219 site visits** for private forest owners, visiting **5,691 acres** of your woodlands to discuss silvicultural practices, forest health management, native plant landscaping, climate change resiliency, construction damage mitigation, invasive pest control, wildlife habitat, and numerous other topics. **Ninety-seven of those site visits were to Leelanau residents**, where I walked with them through their **1,480 acres** and assisted them on management projects with **52 referrals** to both private and public sector professionals.

I reached over **600 interested patrons** at **25 educational events** put on in association with numerous local organizations. This past winter and spring, I connected with almost 200 folks through a Winter Webinar series and a couple seedling workshops hosted in partnership with all three of my conservation districts. I was part of packing and delivering trees at this year's seedling sales, had a few

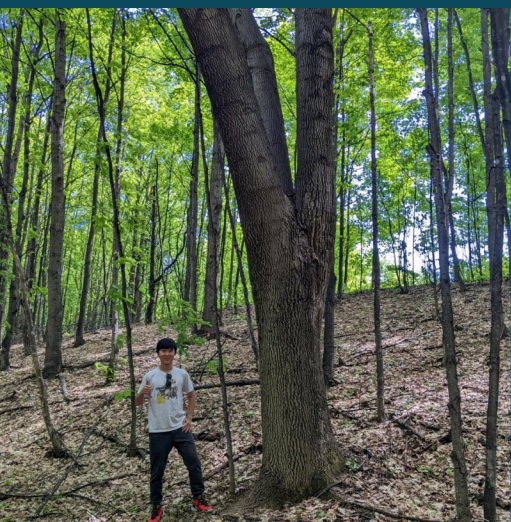
younger folks shadow me on site visits to learn about what I do, hosted guided hikes with entities like American Bird Conservancy and Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, and gave talks to public groups on limiting disease spread and damage when conducting tree work. My favorite public speaking experience was having the honor of being the kickoff presenter for the Leelanau Summinar series. The hospitality and interest from the folks in Leland on tree health and biology was absolutely delightful. I've been able to connect with a wider audience as this job progresses, from connecting with landowners around the county by weekly #ForesterFriday posts on Leelanau Conservation District's Facebook and Instagram pages, to reaching forest stewards statewide with an "At Your Service" article for the fall edition of Michigan Forests, Michigan Forest Association's newsletter.

This next year, my hope is to continue expanding my network and being a segue for private landowners to access the information and professionals they need to execute their forest management goals. You'll soon be seeing flyers and social media posts on the 2023's Winter Webinar series, and I am helping to expand Benzie Conservation District's District Readers to my entire service area. I have been asked to serve on the board for both the Michigan chapter of Society of American

Foresters and Salix Community Forestry Collective. I am working to revamp the Assisted Tree Range Expansion Project (ATREP) website and have been connecting with like-minded individuals at other organizations on action items such as local seed collection and finding champion trees. If you are looking for technical assistance in managing your forests, have ideas for environmental education programming you would like to share, or if you know of local professionals I should be connecting with, please do not hesitate in giving me a call to my work cell (231-866-0103) and/or emailing me (ellie.johnson@macd.org). Thank you for welcoming me into your community and entrusting me to assist you in caring for your woodlands.

Forester Friday Highlights

1. First Friday post (Ellie on a wintry site visit)
2. Tree planting workshop with Grand Traverse CD
3. ArborCon tree pruning demonstration (Lansing)
4. Leelanau forest in winter
5. Planting a tree with predecessor Kama Ross
6. Tree planting at Whaleback Natural Area with the Leelanau Conservancy
7. Botanizing hike with Michigan Botanical Society
8. Conophilis americana, or bear corn, a parasitic plant native to MI forests
9. Hank, Ohio high school student shadowing Ellie, next to a large ash tree in Leelanau county
10. Giant burl on a hemlock tree
11. Collaborating with Katie Spengler (Huron Pines Americorps service member) and Matthew Ross (Botanic Gardens at Historic Barns Park)
12. Clematis virginiana, perennial vine native to MI



Farmland Stewardship

ADAM BROWN

2022 marks the first year that the Leelanau Conservation District has had a MAEAP (Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program) Technician stationed in the office. I was hired in February to take on the role and serve the many agricultural producers in Leelanau and Benzie counties.

The MAEAP Tech assists local growers in assessing and mitigating potential environmental risks on their land or adjacent natural habitat.



With over two decades of conservation experience in agricultural and natural ecosystems, transitioning to the MAEAP Tech position was a great opportunity to share what I've learned with the community. I have a B.S. in Earth Science with minors in Environmental Studies and Biology, and spent the last 8 years owning and operating a diversified, certified-organic vegetable farm in Antrim County. I am quickly adapting to the new role; learning, networking, and helping farmers meet their goals in regards to environmental regulations.



This year, I consulted with 19 growers in Leelanau and Benzie Growers, either to assess their operation - a quinquennial process - or to visit a new producer interested in the program.



Adam hosting an agricultural tire recycling event.



Farm Assessments	19
New Verifications	1
Re-Verifications	5
Systems Verified	9
Risk Reduction Practices	2

PERENNIAL FARM ECOSYSTEM CONFERENCE

Last summer, Adam hosted an array of experts to speak on creating healthy ecosystems in a perennial growing operation, the first event of its kind for LCD. Topics included the significance of pollinator habitat, soil and root health in orchards, plant sap analysis, development of a nutrient foliar plan, and the main tenets of soil health. The speakers were passionate about growing healthy food with sound ecological farming practices and attendees were inspired to put the information to practice in their gardens or orchards. The presentations were stellar, and the conference's provisions were just as good if not better (big thanks goes to Nittolo's Pizza, 9 Bean Rows, Hannah's Bakery, and Pedaling Beans).



Another first for the District, our no-till seeder took two trips to South Manitou Island this year. LCD is thrilled to be part of Mammoth Distilling's project to seed and rebirth a crop of Rosen rye. It's been 100 years since it was first planted on the island and we're excited to see its renaissance. A world class spirit in the making!



WHAT IS MAEAP?

The Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) is an innovative, statewide program that proactively helps growers implement cost-effective practices that protect the natural resources of the landscape. Started in 1998, MAEAP is a free and voluntary program open to all Michigan farmers that recognizes farmers who are top stewards of their land. You have likely seen the ubiquitous MAEAP "This Farm is Environmentally Verified" sign while cruising the county roads.

This, in turn, helps farmers comply with state and federal laws. The program includes four steps:

- Attend an education workshop
- Invite a local MAEAP technician to tour your farm
- Implement practices recommended by the technician
- Earn recognition for your work

MAEAP recognition can be earned in one or more of 4 areas:

- Farmstead
- Cropping
- Livestock
- Forest, Wetlands, & Habitat

Farmers who start or receive recognition by certain dates will be at an advantage for cost share, grants, or other assistance programs. Thousands of farmers have already enrolled in MAEAP, contact Adam to be next!

2

Ag Chemical Container Recycling Events

220

Agricultural Tires Recycled

1

Phase One Educational Event

31

No-Till Drill Rentals

240

Sustainably Planted Acres

The Natural Resource Conservation Service works to provide technical and financial support to landowners as they pursue conservation-oriented projects. Whether planting native trees or installing a high tunnel greenhouse, NRCS can assist.

EQIP

The Environmental Quality Incentives Plan (EQIP) is a program through which NRCS representatives work directly with producers to develop a conservation plan and receive financial assistance in implementing conservation practices. Such a plan, implemented correctly, often yields improved soil health, reduced nonpoint source pollution, and resilient landscapes among a host of other benefits specific to the land and project.

CSP

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is the largest conservation program in the US and represents a genuine, long-term commitment to conservation. NRCS can assist producers both technically and financially to outline and enhance existing efforts to improve land by taking advantage of new conservation practices that fit within current management goals. For example, CSP can help a grower transition from a single cover crop system to a multi-species cover crop rotation.

For more information on NRCS programs, contact the local District Conservationist:

Jason Kimbrough
231-941-0951

jason.kimbrough@mi.usda.gov

EROSION CONTROL

10

STEVE CHRISTENSEN & COLLIN OOSSE

For over 30 years, the Conservation District has served the county as the Soil Erosion Control enforcing agency. We ensure that all construction projects near sensitive areas (such as lakes, streams, and wetlands) comply with state law and maintain natural ecosystem health and function, often working with the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). We also provide resources, contacts, and advice for Leelanau residents facing erosion concerns.

This year has been as busy as any other; we've issued nearly 600 permits to Leelanau landowners. We've implemented a new digital system for permitting and recordkeeping, allowing us to better plan our routes and more readily check in on high-priority sites. Collin is doing most of the site visits while Steve has taken on a supervisory role. We handle all complex or larger projects together, no easy task given the number of challenging sites being developed.

EGLE performed a routine audit of our program this fall. Between the new digital system and the cooperation of our permittees the whole process went smoothly and our program was subsequently approved.



Steve surveying a bluff at a high-risk site and inspecting a roughed-in driveway



NORTHWEST MICHIGAN INVASIVE SPECIES NETWORK ANNUAL SUMMARY

The Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network's (ISN) 2022 season has been a year of learning! Due to significant staff turnover in 2021, ISN entered the 2022 fiscal year without a Coordinator! However, ISN persevered. You may remember that Audrey Menninga took over the Coordinator position. Shelly Stusick stayed strong in her position as Go Beyond Beauty (GBB) Specialist and we also welcomed new staff. In April we were overjoyed to have Habitat Management Specialist Murielle Garbarino join us. She jumped immediately into ISN, helping hire seasonal staff, contacting landowners, and arranging for treatments!

ISN was also able to continue with some of our most popular programs! That includes:

- Garlic mustard dumpsters in SIX places! We were overjoyed to welcome Village of Empire to our host sites this year. With hard work from volunteers, we collected 93 bags of garlic mustard.
 - Japanese barberry trade-up days included another milestone for GBB program as we were able to offer THREE trade-up locations. GBB helped safely dispose of 374 barberry plants.
 - Our treatment crew was able to get our priority invasive species treatments done! So, so many thanks to them for all their hard work, no matter the weather conditions.
 - ISN conducted our two autumn olive workshops. We had amazing turnout! Forty people showed up in Benzie County alone to learn how manage and control autumn olive.
 - Go Beyond Beauty began state-wide expansion! Our first state-wide hub opened through the Friends of the St. Clair River. They've been ecstatic to join us, and we're thrilled to have them.
- This winter we will be resuming hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA) surveys. If you live within ten miles of the Lake Michigan shoreline and have five acres of property, please contact Murielle. Special considerations will be made for properties that have bought hemlock stock.

Stay tuned as we plan our winter events. As always, we appreciate our community's support; if you have any questions or concerns, never hesitate to reach out. You can keep up-to-date about ISN by following us on Facebook (Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network) or Instagram (invasivespeciesnetwork).

Audrey Menninga, ISN Coordinator: amenninga@gtcd.org, 231-299-0786

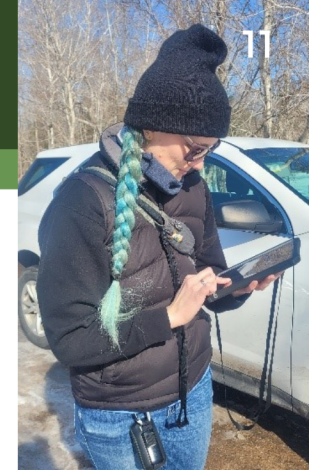
Shelly Stusick, GBB Specialist: [sstusick@gtcd.org](mailto:ssusick@gtcd.org), 231-299-0805

Murielle Garbarino, Habitat Management Specialist: mgarbarino@gtcd.org, 231-941-0960x29

ISN's work is funded in part through grants from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (administered by the US Forest Service and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians), the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (www.Michigan.gov/invasives), and the Good Neighbor Authority (a partnership of the US Forest Service and Michigan DNR), as well as cost-share from landowners and generous donations from supporters.



ISN Team: Audrey Menninga (front), Murielle (left), and Shelly (right)



HWA Surveying

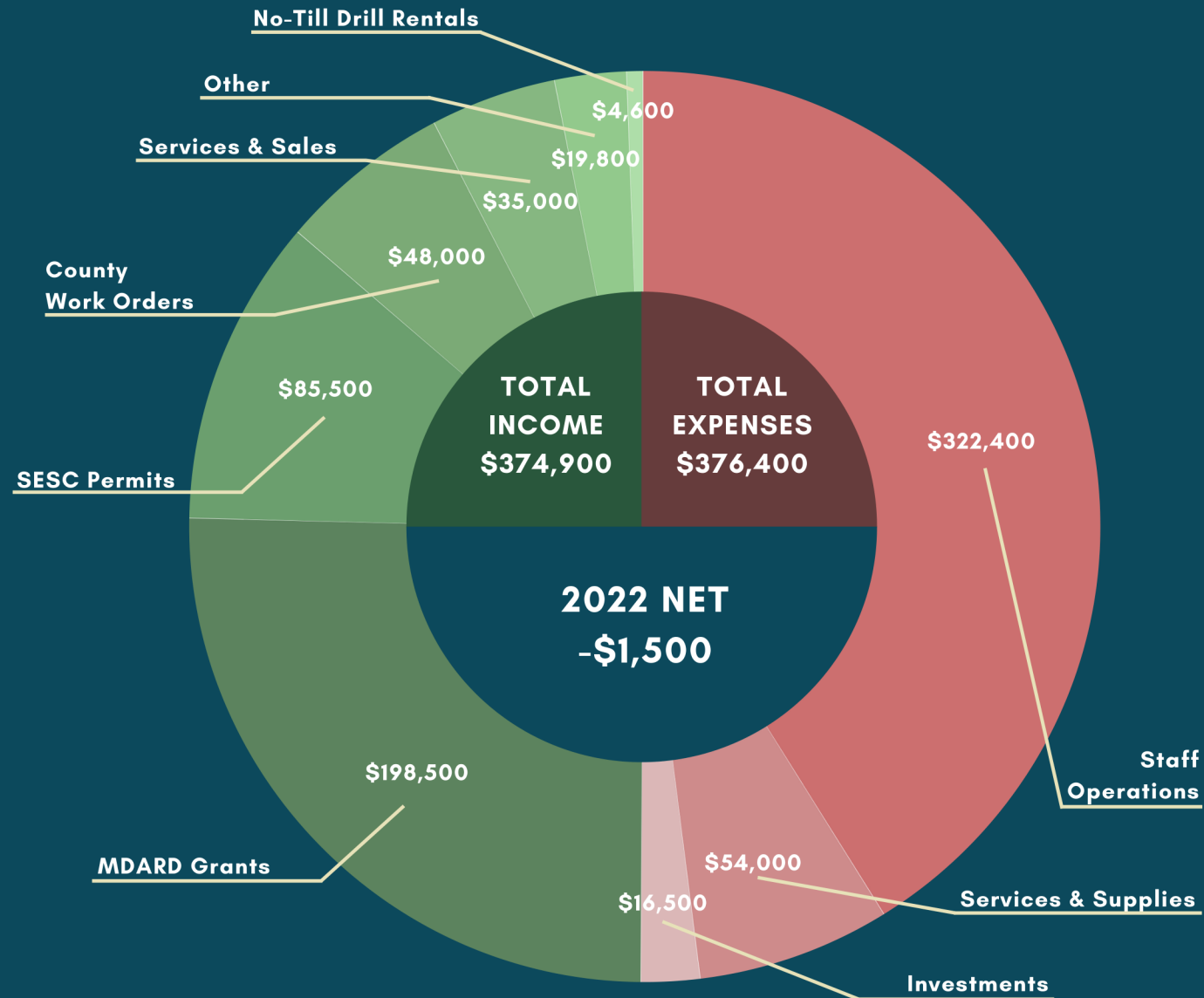
LEELANAU SPOTLIGHT

This year during ISN's annual Clay Cliffs garlic mustard workbee, we highlighted everything a CISMA should be – an amazing group of community volunteers as well as representatives from the LCD, Leelanau Conservancy, MAEAP, and ISN! We were able to cover more ground than we have in past years, including underneath the shrubs that some dedicated volunteers crawled into. So many thanks to our partners and our volunteers of all workbees this year!



ISN Crew Lead – Tanner

2022 FINANCIALS



Thank you to all volunteers, donors, educators, landowners, and customers who made 2022 such a success. We could never do what we do without you. Looking forward to bigger and better things in 2023, we hope see you there!

