



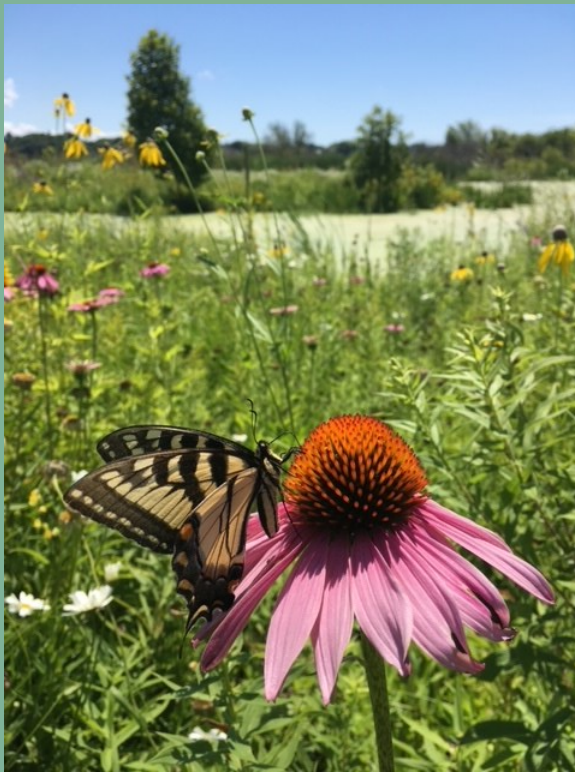
Conserving Muskegon County since 1938!

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# Muskegon Conservation District

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*2020 Annual Report*



*It shall be the mission of the Muskegon Conservation District to conserve, restore, and protect local natural resources for the public good and for the long term stewardship of the land.*

## A Message from the Assistant Executive Director

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Dear Friends,

As we close the books on a challenging year, I am happy to have the opportunity to express our gratitude for everyone who supported us in 2020. It was a year of cancelled workshops, frozen grants, locked doors, and masks. We all learned to 'pivot' in a hurry, while maintaining a proper social distance. We even learned to ZOOM. With all of the challenges 2020 brought, we were still able to complete an increased number of projects and fulfill our mission to protect and preserve our natural resources. As the global debate continues regarding whether the impact of the pandemic on the environment will be positive or negative, here at home in Muskegon County, we are focusing on the positives. Last year we saw a surge in erosion control projects to protect our lakeshore and dunes. We had the opportunity to treat invasive species, restore streambanks, plant hundreds of trees, and create native wildflower meadows. Some of the projects that were completed are highlighted in the next few pages.

Now as we begin 2021, we are grateful and optimistic. Many thanks to our friends and partners who weathered the storm with us. We are grateful for your support and collaboration, and for allowing us the opportunity to serve.

Your Friend in Conservation,

Sue Hatting, Assistant Executive Director

### **Staff**

Dallas Goldberg  
*Executive Director*

Sue Hatting  
*Assistant Executive Director*

Emily Grasch  
*Project Manager*

Kathryn Pfister  
*Project Manager*

Max Duve  
*Seasonal Technician*

Chelsey Wabsis  
*Seasonal Technician*

Symon Cronk  
*Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program Technician*

Jordan DeVries  
*Produce Safety Technician*

Rod Denning  
*Forestry Assistance Program*

### **Board of Directors**

E. Paul Schroeder  
*Chair*

Nancy Frye  
*Vice-Chair*

John Jurcich  
*Treasurer / Secretary*

Gale Nobes  
*Member*

George McLaughlin  
*Member*

Keith Ramthun  
*Appointed Member*

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## 2020 Quick Facts

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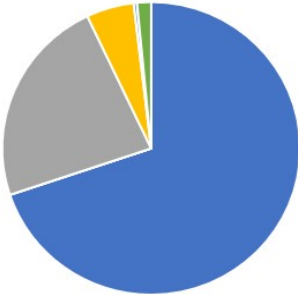
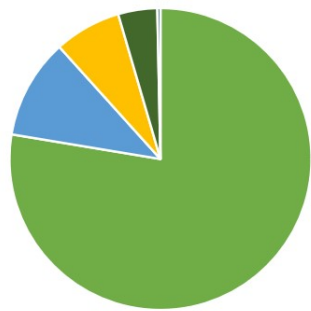
- 450 Large ball and burlap trees, 250 container trees, and 6,000 seedlings
- Planted over 15 acres of food plots, grasses, and wildflowers.
- Planted 6,000 live stakes along streambanks over 3 linear streambank miles
- Treated 10 acres (7.5 football fields) of invasive species including Japanese knotweed, phragmites, oriental bittersweet, autumn olive, and garlic mustard
- 265 Christmas trees were recycled and used for channel stabilization practices
- 110 adults attend workshops before pandemic, and 80 students participated in class presentations
- Hosted the Muskegon Area Beekeepers
- Procedure 51 (macroinvertebrate and habitat study) at 16 site locations



## 2020 Budget

### Revenue

Grants	\$284,585	64.88%
Forestry	\$48,240	11%
Sales & Services	\$27,558	6.3%
Donations	\$7,822	1.78%
Other	\$70,403	16.05%
<b>Total</b>	<b>438,668</b>	



### Expenses

District Operations	\$308,489	69.87%
Capital Outlay	\$0	0%
Conservation Materials	\$101,903	23.08%
Other	\$22,817	5.17%
Outreach	\$1,600	0.36%
Equipment	\$6,728	1.52%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$441,597</b>	

## Thank You!

Muskegon Conservation District would like to extend a deep thank you to all of our donors. Your generosity provided \$7,774.41 in FY20. Donations from individuals regardless of size are crucial to our operations. In the coming year, a new donor program will be implemented to work on increasing donor support and giving. Donations, unlike other revenue streams, allow flexibility to work on projects that are the highest priority for the community.

## Business Sponsors

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VERSATILE  
FABRICATION

We would like to thank all our business sponsors who assisted with our programming and fundraisers. Businesses like you build stronger communities and natural resources resiliency. Interested in making a difference that is tax deductible contact Sue at [sue.hatting@macd.org](mailto:sue.hatting@macd.org) to learn more about our sponsorship program.

## Looking Forward

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Our project calendar is slated with a array of projects around Muskegon County:

- Invasive species strike team out in full force this summer
  - Erosion and sedimentation control projects along watercourses
  - Youth Environmental Stewardship Program with local schools
  - Assessing dunes to ensure protection of threatened and endangered species through Vegetation Removal Assurances (VRA's)
  - Wildlife habitat enhancement with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources
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## Invasive Species Treatments

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### CISMA Treatments

The Muskegon Conservation District CISMA strike team treated 6.3 football fields (8.4 acres) of Japanese Knotweed in Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana Counties this year. This treatment program was partly funded through the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (MISCP). Land owners were asked to share costs of treatments this year due to a budget cut in the grant program. FY 21 will be the last year of funding through this grant cycle. MCD is seeking out grant opportunities to continue this work for the 2022 fiscal year. For more information on how to sign up for the program email [muskegoncd@macd.org](mailto:muskegoncd@macd.org).



### Bank Stabilizations

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The Muskegon Conservation District used bioengineering methods to stabilize riparian banks for private and public shoreline this past year. These methods use biodegradable materials to create soft shoreline surfaces to stabilize the shoreline, while still providing habitat for aquatic and terrestrial life. For information on how to sign up for the program email [muskegoncd@macd.org](mailto:muskegoncd@macd.org). (Photo below shows a site before and after bank stabilization on White Lake)



## Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Tree Planting

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As part of the 2019 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Muskegon Conservation District planted over 2,210 trees. 100 Large trees were planted along the Holland drain, 110 large trees and 2,000 seedlings planted along the Ribe drain. The installation of these trees will reduce 241,950 gallons of storm water runoff within the first five years of establishment.



## Wildflower Plantings

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Hilite International is taking the greener path when it comes to lawn care. They turned part of their conventional lawn into native wildlife prairie. This year the District expanded the native landscaping an additional .25 acre. This prairie will save the company 250,000 gallons of water annually and will reduce nitrogen and phosphorus loads from entering our waterways. Adding native wildflowers will also benefit local wildlife and pollinators. They are planning on continuing to expand their wildflower planting in the future. Call the office today, to see how your company can make the change to a greener path.



## Prescribe Burn Fire Trailer

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As part of a Muskegon Community Foundation grant, the Muskegon Conservation District was able to purchase and assemble all the necessary equipment into a trailer that can be rented out to the public to perform prescribed burns. If you are interested in renting out the trailer please call the office at (231) 828-5097 or visit <https://muskegoncd.org/product/fire-trailer-rental/> for more information.



## Storm Water

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The Muskegon Conservation District is a partner in the Muskegon MS4 advisory group. This group combines the cities of Muskegon, Norton Shores, Muskegon Heights, Roosevelt Park and North Muskegon as well as the Road and Drain Commissioners with a shared goal of improving stormwater quality in the area.

In 2020, District staff surveyed stormwater systems and outfall structures during our annual dry weather screening. Dry weather screening is a procedure carried out to see if illicit discharges or unwanted pollutant sources are entering our surface waters via stormwater drains.

In addition to dry weather screening the District relies on individuals within the community to report suspected illicit discharges. If you see or suspect an illicit discharge please report it to your local DPW or call the Muskegon Conservation District at (231) 828-5097.

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## Educational Workshops

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Muskegon Conservation District had a list of workshops that we planned to host for the public and then COVID 19 shut things down. Our forester Rod Denning, was able to host a few forestry based workshops before the pandemic hit. The District also held a fruit pruning workshop before the country started to shut down. We are looking forward to opening our doors for more workshop opportunities in the FY 21.



## Fundraising Events

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Fundraising looked a lot different this year. Even with COVID 19 we managed to figure out a system to overcome the challenges. The seedling fundraiser was set up as a drive thru pick-up. It ran so smoothly this might become the new way of picking up trees. The native perennial sale was also very successful this year with over 55 varieties of native perennials available to purchase. If you are interested in signing up for our mailing list to receive sale flyers, contact us at [muskegoncd@macd.org](mailto:muskegoncd@macd.org).

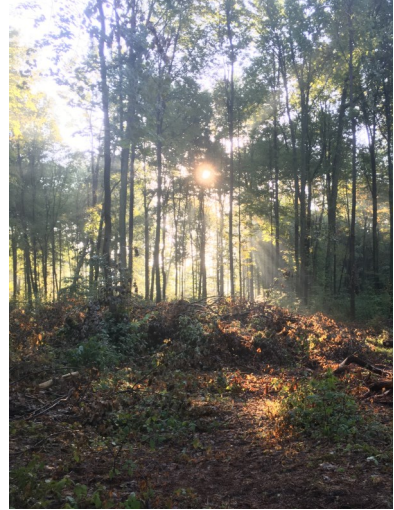


## District Land Management

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After the review of forestry surveys conducted by District staff in winter, there were a few parcels that were selected for harvesting. One of these cuts consisted of a thinning on a red pine plantation that was ridden with disease. Another parcel that was chosen was a selective hardwood cut to open up canopy cover for understory vegetation. Practices like these make stronger, more vigorous forest, that can better withstand disease and invasive species.

The Muskegon Conservation District also started tackling a large honeysuckle infestation on one of the MCD parcels. This will be a multiple year treatment.



## Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program

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This past year, interest, engagement, and implementation was at an all-time high with the MAEAP Program. On-farm stewardship and sustainability are gaining traction in the community. 97 farm visits occurred, resulting in 31 farm verifications. Over 22 farms received assistance for soil sampling, and water sampling. In addition to on-farm best management practices, MAEAP has partnered with numerous watershed organizations, and neighboring Conservation Districts to promote and advocate soil health, water quality and ecological land management. Learn about ways to improve and best manage your land. Email



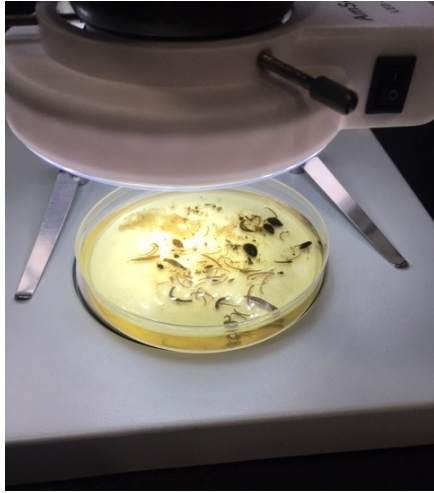
Symon Cronk, MAEAP Technician Newaygo & Muskegon Counties at [symon.cronk@macd.org](mailto:symon.cronk@macd.org) or call the office at (231) 828-5097.

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## Procedure 51's

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District staff conducted biological and habitat surveys for local waterways. Surveys included on site habitat assessments that graded metrics like epifaunal substrate (available cover), pool substrate characterization, pool variability, sediment deposition, and channel alteration, just to name a few. There was also the biological component where staff members classified and counted macroinvertebrates into families. Conducting these surveys is a great way to monitor the health of the waterway and create best management practices to improve the overall health of the stream.



## Forestry Assistance Program

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2020 marked the 8<sup>th</sup> year that the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has funded a District Forester to work with the Forestry Assistance Program (FAP). In fiscal year 2020, 145 contacts were made to the District Forester. As a result, 85 site visits were provided covering 2,625 acres (4.1 sq. miles) throughout the three-county (Oceana, Newaygo, and Muskegon) Region 15 service area.

A major focus of the FAP, is the promotion of the Qualified Forest Program (QFP). In FY 2020, 22 landowners were verified for the QFP totaling 4.3 sq. 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 good forest stewardship of local woodlots, and to provide forest products to Michigan's forest products industry. Site visits and QFP verifications were down 18% and 48% respectively this year compared to last, most likely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. 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](mailto:rod.denning@macd.org).

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## Natural Resources Conservation Service

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The 2018 Farm Bill offers a variety of programs to aid in implementing conservation practices on their land. Funding is available for the following practices to help curb erosion, conserve and improve soil health, conserve water resources, establish wildlife habitat and manage forestland. Last year a total of 4,535 acres received some type of land treatments to benefit soil, water, air, plant, and animal natural resources. Some common conservation practices include wetland restoration, cover crops, residue management, nutrient and pest management, pollinator planting, brush management, tree/shrub establishment, and forest stand improvement. Please call your local NRCS office at (231) 924-2060 for more information on how to get started.

NRCS FY 2019 Accomplishments:

- Conservation Technical Assistance 1,662 acres treated
- Environmental Quality Incentive Program 1,395 acres treated
- Wetland Reserve Program 2,190 acres monitored



## **(EQIP) Environmental Incentives Program**

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The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. It supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through EQIP, farmers, private forest landowners and Federally recognized American Indian tribes may receive financial and technical assistance to implement structural and land Management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

## **(CSP) Conservation Stewardship Program**

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This program provides financial assistance for farmers and private forest landowners to assist in maintaining the conservation practices already implemented and to challenge them to try new conservation techniques such as soil testing, scouting for pests, or using nutrient management.



## Teamwork Makes the Dream Work!

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community foundation

**Muskegon County**



## Thank You To All Our Partners!

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### *Habitat Management of Michigan*





## *2020 Annual Report*

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4735 Holton Road  
Twin Lake, MI  
49457

Phone: 231.828.5097  
Email: [muskegoncd@macd.org](mailto:muskegoncd@macd.org)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Muskegoncd](https://www.facebook.com/Muskegoncd)  
Instagram: [www.instagram.com/muskegon\\_conservation\\_district](https://www.instagram.com/muskegon_conservation_district)