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SCD technicians Colleen Gleason, Donna Kanan, and Andrea Wendt posing for a photo before Shiawassee County Farm Bureau's Project R.E.D. event.

The Shiawassee Conservation District developed the “Shiawassee County Parks Invasive Species Survey” in June 2022. Each of the five county parks were surveyed by Conservation District technicians to locate, identify, and document invasive species threatening the ecosystems of our county parks. This document is also designed to provide technical assistance to the parks committee for invasive species management.

Autumn olive and honeysuckle were found in every park. Other common invasive plants found include multiflora rose, Japanese barberry, and reed canary grass.



## Youth Education

In 2022, the Shiawassee Conservation District was very fortunate to have the opportunity to teach youth across the county. Topics varied from water quality to the importance of trees, to soil health. “I look forward to youth outreach days,” said SCD technician Colleen Gleason; “Educating the next generation of conservation stewards is so important in order to have healthy land and water resources for the next generation.”

Our first youth outreach event of 2022 was in partnership with Farm Bureau for March is Reading Month. SCD Conservation Specialist, Andrea Wendt, volunteered and read the selected book to Bryant Elementary second graders.

For Arbor Day, District technicians, Gleason and Wendt, visited kindergarten classrooms at Nellie Reed Elementary. The afternoon was spent teaching them all the great things trees do for us and the environment, different things made from trees, and how we can help trees. The kids even acted out the life cycle of a tree. It was a fun-filled, educational afternoon.

In August, we had the opportunity to participate in the Shiawassee Family YMCA Healthy Kids Day. Using a larger-than-life cheeseburger deluxe, or what we call the “soil burger”, we educated families on the importance of healthy soils. Everything we eat can be traced back to the soil from the bun to the mayonnaise.

We joined Shiawassee County Farm Bureau in August at their Project R.E.D. event, teaching hundreds of second graders from all over Shiawassee County the importance of water. The students learned about water conservation and how to build smart habits that will last a lifetime.

We ended our youth outreach for the year at Perry Middle School in November. Gleason and Wendt met with over 50 fifth graders to teach them about groundwater, pollution sources, and watersheds. We utilized our Groundwater and Enviroscope models to demonstrate the concepts of nonpoint source pollution and aquifers.

The Shiawassee Conservation District has educational programs available for groups of all ages and sizes throughout Shiawassee County. For more information, contact the Conservation District.

## Shiawassee Conservation District Annual Meeting Open House & Breakfast

**Saturday, March 25, 2023**

McCurdy Park Event Center  
457 Emma Drive, Corunna

Breakfast served 9:00 AM—11:00 AM

Awards & Election Results Presented at 11:00 AM

**E & J Schneider Farms LLC, 2022 Conservation Farmer of the Year  
Zsuzsanna Toth-Mahon, 2022 Friend of Conservation**

RSVP by Thursday, March 16, 2023

Shiawassee Conservation District (989) 723-8263 x3

If you need accommodations to participate in this event, please contact the Shiawassee Conservation District at (989) 723-8263, ext. 3 by March 3, 2023. USDA is an equal opportunity employer, provider, and lender.

## 2022 MAEAP Recap

The Shiawassee Conservation District had a busy year helping farms get verified through the Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). The Conservation District assisted farms with 11 new verifications and 24 reverifications in Shiawassee and Livingston Counties in 2022.

MAEAP is a voluntary program that helps farms of all sizes and all commodities voluntarily prevent or minimize agricultural pollution risks. This program is designed to teach farmers how to reduce farmers' legal and environmental risks through education, farm-specific risk assessment, on-farm verification that ensures the farmer has implemented environmentally sound practices.

A farm begins their journey with a free and confidential farm assessment with a Conservation District technician. The assessment analyzes components of MAEAP's four systems, including Farmstead, Cropping, Livestock, and Forest/Wetland/Habitat. Each system examines different aspects of the farm and determines if there is a risk to the environment.

These assessments are voluntary and completely confidential, meaning that there is no risk of being reported for any regulatory violation. In 2022, the Conservation District visited 23 farms and 9 forests and conducted a total of 64 assessments in Shiawassee and Livingston Counties.

If a farm is found to be meeting all risk reductions in a system, they can choose to become MAEAP verified. When you see signs along the road that read "This Farm is Environmentally Verified" it means that the landowner has voluntarily taken every step required to meet state and federal environmental regulations and Michigan Right to Farm guidelines.

The following Shiawassee County farms were verified in 2022:

- Gabrielle and David Baker of Feighner Family Farms newly verified in the Farmstead and Livestock systems
- Brian and Casie Stiles of Stiles Pumpkin Farm and Back Road Blossoms newly verified in Farmstead and Cropping systems
- Troy and Todd Hull of Hull Brothers Farms newly verified in Cropping system and reverified in Farmstead and Livestock systems
- Brian Washburn of Washburn Farms reverified in Farmstead, Cropping, and Livestock systems
- Jake and Michelle Glass reverified in the Cropping system
- Ken Allen of Allen Farms reverified in Farmstead, Cropping, and Forest, Wetland and Habitat systems
- Joe and Eugene Schneider of E&J Schneider Farm LLC reverified in Farmstead and Cropping systems
- Jeff Blight of E&J Blight Farms reverified in Farmstead and Cropping systems
- Craig Howard of The Farm reverified in Farmstead and Cropping systems
- Tony Lindner of Sutton Farms reverified in the Cropping system

Many other producers in Shiawassee County are working towards verification. While becoming MAEAP verified is not an easy task, it can benefit you and your farm in many ways. Not only does being verified recognize you as a good steward of the land, but it also comes with certain regulatory benefits and additional access to financial assistance for other environmental programs. To learn more about MAEAP, contact the Shiawassee Conservation District.



**Hull Brothers Farms achieved NEW MAEAP verification for their cropping system and reverifications for their Farmstead and Livestock systems. They use conservation in their row and beef operation to ensure they are protecting natural resources on their farm and for our communities.**



## What Trees Should I Plant?

The decision of what trees and shrubs to plant on your property should be made before the day you want to purchase and plant them. For some, the question of what to plant can seem overwhelming because there are so many choices. Taking the time to plan beforehand is an important step to ensure you will get the most out of your efforts.

The first question you should ask yourself is why do you want to plant trees and shrubs? Among other reasons, they can be planted to enhance aesthetics, provide wildlife habitat, provide a future income, and enhance pollinator habitat. Next, you should consider the area they will be planted. A few important things to consider is the soil type, sunlight, and the ease of access for maintenance. Finally, you will need to learn about the tree species to ensure that they are appropriate to plant. For example, a red-osier dogwood shrub requires full sun so you wouldn't want to plant it in a shady spot. Northern White-cedar trees have a high risk for deer browse, so if you are in an area highly populated by deer you may want to install tree protectors or consider a different tree species.

The Shiawassee Conservation District offers free conservation planning. The planning process includes input from the landowner so that the completed plan meets their goals. If your plan schedules tree and shrub establishment, it will include the following: what species to plant; when to plant; how to plant; and maintenance requirements. The conservation plan will answer the question of what trees should be planted!

The Conservation District has a variety of trees and shrubs available for purchase this spring. Orders must be placed before March 30, 2023. Contact the District at (989) 723-8263 ext. 3 for further information about the sale or to get started on your conservation plan.

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# Shiawassee Conservation District Attends National Conservation Planning Training

The National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP) training workshop was held in Bloomington, MN, the week of May 9. Nine conservation district employees from Michigan attended, including three from Shiawassee Conservation District. New conservation planning policies, planning tools, and communication skills were presented over the 3-day event.

“Conservation” can be defined as a careful preservation and protection of something. Although the definition doesn’t change, the conservation practices, policies, and the tools used in natural resource conservation are always evolving. The Shiawassee Conservation District believes that professional development and training workshops, such as this, are key in providing the most meaningful conservation planning services to landowners, land managers, and producers.

Shiawassee Conservation District staff are working towards becoming certified conservation planners. The process involves earning educational credits and developing a conservation plan to be reviewed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. “New conservation planning processes and tools have been introduced over the last couple years. This workshop provided me with an opportunity to learn how to more effectively use them to help Shiawassee County residents plan for and protect our natural resources. It was inspiring,” stated Donna Kanan, SCD Conservation Specialist.

Throughout the conservation planning process, planners work closely with landowners and land managers to ensure that their plan meets their individual needs. Oftentimes, conservation can be a time consuming and expensive process. Equipment availability, economic considerations, and timing are among the topics that need to be considered. “The conference was a huge learning opportunity, not only from the training sessions, but from meeting with people across the country and learning what natural resource issues they are facing. I am excited to use this information and work alongside landowners to create conservation plans we are both proud of, which will provide benefits for them and future generations.” stated Colleen Gleason, SCD Watershed Technician.

The Shiawassee Conservation District continues to offer free and confidential conservation planning assistance. For more information or to request assistance, please contact the District office.



Michigan was well represented with eleven of the 150 participants from 45 states, Puerto Rico and Guam attending the National Conservation Planning Partnership training workshop in May. Pictured from left to right: Renee Santi, Calhoun Conservation District; Alec Smith, Oakland Conservation District; Lynnette Ramsey, Missaukee Conservation District; Isiah Strand, Calhoun Conservation District; Sarena Prince, Barry Conservation District; Colleen Gleason, Shiawassee Conservation District; Astor Boozer, NRCS; Keeley Pape, Lenawee Conservation District; Donna Kanan, Shiawassee Conservation District; Melissa Higbee, Shiawassee Conservation District; John Switzer, MDARD; Kelcie Sweeney, MDARD; Kristy Oates, NRCS; and Rich Duesterhaus, NACD/NCDEA.



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## Working For You

As a local unit of government of the State of Michigan, the Shiawassee Conservation District is the local provider of natural resource management services. Hand-in-hand with local, state and federal organizations, we work to conserve our natural resources and to deliver technical assistance that directly impacts the quality of our community.

Getting conservation on the land has been a top priority for us at the Shiawassee Conservation District, even throughout the changes we have all experienced over the last couple years. We have assisted people across the county to protect the natural resources we all rely on. We achieved this with meaningful conservation planning, financial assistance to implement those plans, and conservation education. The Conservation District and NRCS work together to help set conservation goals, work with people on the land, and provide services. We take great pride that our agencies were created out of the dust bowl together and we are committed to putting conservation on the land in partnership.

In 2022, we have assisted landowners and producers to implement conservation practices on more than 62,140 acres of land. We have brought more than \$1,093,280 to our local economy through Farm Bill and Conservation District programs. Those impressive numbers were accomplished by working one-on-one with producers and landowners to develop meaningful conservation plans. These plans are developed to not only protect natural resources, but to do it in a way that meets the needs and abilities of the participant.

Each acre of land is unique in its site conditions and uses. This means that the conservation efforts for each site are also unique. In Shiawassee County, a wide variety of conservation practices were installed using technical and financial assistance received through our office. On cropland, our technicians certified more than 3,000 acres of nutrient and pesticide management and

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Over 40 people participated in a paddle along the Shiawassee River to learn about invasive plants. The event was held in partnership between the Shiawassee Conservation District, Friends of the Shiawassee River, Devries Nature Conservancy and the GiLLS CISMA.

### *Paddle with Friends*

The Shiawassee Conservation District partnered with the Friends of the Shiawassee River, Devries Nature Conservancy, and Genesee, Lapeer, Livingston, and Shiawassee Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (GiLLS CISMA) to lead an invasive species kayak trip along the Shiawassee River. Over 40 participants attended the June event to learn about invasive species and how to prevent them from spreading. The paddle started at Devries Nature Conservancy and ended at Henderson Park. It was a beautiful day spent on the Shiawassee River!

An invasive species is an introduced organism that causes environmental or economic harm in its new environment. Before the kayak trip began, District staffer Colleen Gleason clipped branches of invasive species and passed them around to attendees so they could see the noxious plants up close before identifying them along the river. “Educating the public on invasive species is crucial; each species is damaging in its own way,” stated Gleason. “The more awareness we can raise on them, the faster we can stop them from spreading.”

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# 2022 Shiawassee Conservation District Farmer of the Year

By Melissa Shepard, editor

The Shiawassee Conservation District has announced that E&J Schneider Farms LLC is the 2022 Conservation Farmer of the Year. They will receive the award at the Shiawassee Conservation District Annual Meeting on Saturday, March 25.

E&J Schneider Farms LLC is located in Saginaw County but also farms in Shiawassee County. It is run by brothers Eugene and Joe Schneider. Eugene is married to Betsy and they have three children. Joe is married to Bernadette and they have a daughter. Eugene worked at A.O. Smith for 30 years and now works solely at the farm, while Joe started working at the farm right out of high school. Their father started farming in 1955 and still comes into the workshop every day to help out. He retired from full-time farming around the age of 80.

Their farm is in Saginaw County and made up of around 2,000 acres across Saginaw and Shiawassee counties. They farm corn, soybeans, and wheat. The Schneiders' use vertical till and some no-till on their crops. They also use cover crops after the wheat is harvested, plant radishes and oats. Cover crops improve the soil texture and are good for wildlife. Since they have a lot of lighter soils in their fields, when they no-till to cover crops, they see an increase in yields. This also helps to prevent the soil from eroding into ditches.

E&J Schneider Farms LLC is MAEAP verified, the first time in 2017 for cropping and farmstead and re-verified in 2022. MAEAP is the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program, which is an innovative, proactive program that helps farms of all sizes and all commodities voluntarily prevent or minimize agricultural risks. Currently the Schneiders are working on getting MAEAP verification for forestry management by using brush management and forestry land improvements. Their goal is to provide better quality trees that they can sell for lumber.

Two important conservation practices that they have installed on the farmstead are an Agricultural Handling Facility (AHF) and an On-Farm Secondary Containment. The AHF is for pesticide and liquid fertilizer containment and the On-Farm Secondary Containment consists of three 1000-gallon double wall fuel containers and a loading pad. The purpose of both practices is to contain accidental spills, which prevents contaminants from soaking into the soil and affecting the water supply. Both practices were installed using the assistance of the Natural Resource Conservation

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**E&J SCHNEIDER Farms LLC** was chosen as the **Shiawassee Conservation District Farmer of the Year**. Shown here are: from left, Eugene Schneider and Joe Schneider, next to their MAEAP Verification Sign.

(Courtesy Photo)

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## Looking Glass River Watershed Project 2022 Recap

The Looking Glass River Watershed Restoration Project had a great year. This project is part of a grant awarded to the Shiawassee Conservation District (SCD) in fall of 2020 through the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Nonpoint Source Program. The goal of this project is to conserve and protect water quality by helping agricultural producers integrate conservation practices into their operations.

Included in this project is the Agricultural Incentives Program (AIP). This program assists agricultural producers in the Looking Glass River Watershed improve water quality through voluntary programs. Producers can receive technical and financial assistance to incorporate conservation practices into their operations. Conservation practices available through this program include cover crops, nutrient management, no-till, and filter strips.

Seven producers enrolled in the AIP, totaling 1,369 acres. Throughout the watershed, SCD staff conducted 21 field visits, developed eight conservation plans, and helped facilitate the application process for numerous landowners applying for conservation Farm Bill programs. In addition, producers in the Looking Glass River Watershed achieved three MAEAP verifications, two reverifications, and twelve assessments.

In January 2022, 74 agricultural landowners and producers throughout the watershed were mailed letters and project flyers. In August of 2022, we followed up on this mailing by emailing 45 individuals that owned or farmed land in the Looking Glass River Watershed. We have had 15 inquiries because of this mailing.

We were thrilled to participate in several community events this year. District staff, Colleen Gleason, Donna Kanan, and Andrea Wendt participated in Shiawassee County Farm Bureau's Project R.E.D. teaching the importance of water quality with county second graders. In November, Wendt and Gleason also met with Perry Middle School fifth graders to teach them about watersheds, ground water, and how to protect water quality.

"It has been a productive year working in this watershed," stated SCD technician Colleen Gleason, "I'm looking forward to getting more conservation on the ground and reaching more individuals in 2023." Funds are available to agricultural producers wishing to participate in the Agricultural Incentives Program. To find out if you qualify, and for more information on how you can make positive changes to help our most precious water resources, contact the Shiawassee Conservation District.

This information is part of a larger project funded by EGLE under the NPS Control Fund and Section 319 of the federal CWA.

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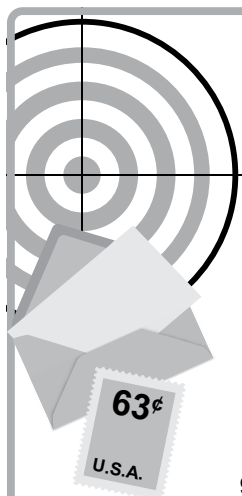
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# Voluntary Conservation Improves Water Quality

Working in partnership with Shiawassee Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), farmers are helping to protect the water that our communities depend on. They voluntarily use proven conservation practices on their land, and in their operations, that protect water and all our natural resources.

The practices and systems that the Conservation District and NRCS promote can help farmers improve the health of their soils, which keeps valuable nutrients on their land to be used by their crops, and out of nearby streams and waterways. These practices include cover crops, reduced tillage, and nutrient management. More than 6,200 acres of cover crops were planted in 2022 through Farm Bill Conservation Programs, and more than 1,733 acres of nutrient management were implemented in Shiawassee County.

Those numbers are impressive, and even more so when you realize that they are only the acres enrolled in Farm Bill Conservation Programs. Farmers

in Shiawassee County are planting hundreds of additional acres of cover crops, using reduced tillage, and following nutrient management plans all on their own because they know the advantages of maintaining healthy soils. They know that healthy soils can help them manage extreme weather events by providing better water retention for crops during drought and keeping more water and nutrients in the soil during floods. Farmers also know that healthy soils mean healthier crops and cleaner water.

The Shiawassee Conservation District works everyday with people who want to do their part to preserve our water and be good stewards of the land. In 2022, more than 22,000 acres were included in conservation plans and enrolled into Farm Bill conservation programs. In addition, six farms achieved MAEAP verifications and there were 19 re-verifications. Every acre counts in the conservation and improvement of our water resources.

Contact the Conservation District office to learn more about improving water quality, voluntary conservation programs, and conservation planning at (989) 723-8263 ext. 3.



The Shiawassee Conservation District is accepting orders for the Spring Tree Sale through March 31. Order forms can be found at [www.shiawasseeccd.org](http://www.shiawasseeccd.org) or by contacting the office at (989) 723-8263 ext. 3. Supplies are limited. Orders are filled as they are received. The orders will be available for pick up at the Shiawassee County Fair Draft Horse Barn on Thursday, April 20 and Friday, April 21.

## Working For You

Continued from Page 4

more than 6,400 acres of cover crops. Other practices include drainage water management, and no-till. Forestland practices certified included just over 200 acres of invasive

species treatment, and 80 acres of forest stand improvement. Other practices include tree planting and early successional habitat development.

Looking forward to 2023 and beyond, we are committed to continu-

ing to work with you, the residents of Shiawassee County. Together we can make a real difference in the conservation of our natural resources for our families, our communities, and our Michigan.

## Paddle with Friends

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Throughout the paddle, invasive plant species were identified within the river and along the riverbanks. One invasive aquatic plant found was the Eurasian watermilfoil; it creates dense mats in the water which shades out native plants and makes it harder for fish to find food. Along the riverbanks we identified numerous invasive plants such as, autumn olive and multiflora rose. Autumn olive

and multiflora rose are invasive shrubs that impact soil health, wildlife habitat, and our native plants.

The Shiawassee Conservation District can help identify and develop a conservation plan to control invasive plant species on your property. The District can then assist landowners in implementing their conservation plan using technical and financial assistance through Farm Bill and District programs. Contact the District office at (989) 723-8263 ext. 3 for help identifying and controlling invasive plants on your property.

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## 2022 Shiawassee Conservation District Farmer of the Year

Continued from Page 5

Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) program.

Schneiders' participate in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Like EQIP, CSP is a conservation Farm Bill program through NRCS. Before applying for CSP, the Conservation District looked at the practices they are currently using and provided recommendations on how they can improve. Conservation practices they have implemented through CSP are field borders, filter strips, and conservation cover. The filter strip and field borders were installed around the fields and the woods. Along with the conservation cover, the practices were planted with a seed mix that provides food and habitat for pollinators, which helps bees and butterflies. The filter strip helps prevent soil from eroding to the ditch.

With 10 plus years working the Shiawassee Conservation District, Joe Schneider had many good things to say about the District. "The employees do a heck of a job with the conservation programs they have. They walk you through everything. Such a great staff." He also added, "Everything clicks and we work together well. The District makes it simple for the farmers."



SHIAWASSEE  
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