

Annual Report Fiscal Year 2025

Kent Conservation District

An annual recognition of the Kent Conservation District's work to advance soil and water health and promote long-term environmental resilience across the county.

Mission

To protect and enhance the natural resources of Kent County.

About KCD

Kent Conservation District provides natural resource management services that help residents conserve land and protect the environment. As a local unit of government, KCD is led by a five-member public elected board and grounded in the belief that conservation decisions are best made at the local level with state and federal technical support.

A High Level Impact In Kent County

100

Agricultural land risk reductions addressed

561

Invasive species projects treated

45,480

Volunteer hours contributed in partnership with the Conservation District

\$1 Kent County Match → Nearly \$10 for Conservation | \$681,857 Annual Revenue



MEET THE TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jerry Miller, Ph. D. Soil Scientist

Board Chair

James DeYoung, Farm Consultant

Vice Chair

Karly Koetje, Farmer

Treasurer

Collin Crumback, Farmer

Director

C.J. Biggs, Attorney

Director

Kylee Zdunic-Rasch, Farmer

Associate Director

A Letter from the District

2025 brought us new partnerships, expanded conservation projects, a growing team, and deepened relationships across Kent County. We continue to be inspired by the dedication and passion of our staff—they meet every challenge with purpose and a true commitment to improving the land, water, and habitats that make our county such a remarkable place to live.

As we move into 2026, we look forward to building on this momentum—strengthening our programs, expanding our reach, and welcoming an even broader diversity of partners into our conservation community. From supporting farmers through regenerative agriculture and MAEAP to restoring habitat, treating invasive species, and connecting residents with native plants and trees, our work remains grounded in collaboration and guided by the needs of the people we serve.

If you've been thinking about taking action to care for the land, now is a great time to begin. Start small. Notice the native plants thriving in a park or field. Walk a trail and observe how healthy soil and clean water shape the landscape. Talk with a neighbor about the trees in your yard or the stream in your community. Volunteer at a habitat project. Plant a tree. Your actions matter.

The Kent Conservation District is here to support you—whether you're managing farmland, restoring a backyard habitat, or learning how to make a positive environmental impact for the first time. Thank you for being part of this work. We truly couldn't do it without you.

Wishing you peaceful moments in a forest, beside a stream, or under the shade of a newly planted tree.

Erin Sloan-Turner and Jerry Miller

KCD STAFF

Erin Sloan-Turner
District Manager

Sam Brady
Strike Team Lead

Katie Droscha
CTAI - Soil Conservationist

Hannah Rector
Strike Team Member

Ryan Wilemski
Conservation Coordinator

David Richards
Strike Team Member

John Bastianelli
NFWF Engineer

Alex Birkman
Strike Team Member

Michael Ewing
MAEAP/CTAP Technician

Andrew Lidral
Strike Team Member

Joel Betts
Watershed Specialist

Jamie Zimmerman
Ag Tech

Bob Klein
Ag Tech

Ian Seager
Ag Tech

Community Events

Direct Impact Through Education and Volunteer Days



Community engagement was at the heart of KCD's conservation efforts this year. Through 35 hands-on events, residents learned to identify and manage invasive species, restore habitat, and support local ecosystems. Our volunteers played a transformational role—donating 45,480 hours to on-the-ground conservation efforts, from removing invasive species to distributing thousands of native trees and plants. KCD also partnered with five schools, engaging over 200 K-12 students in meaningful, place-based conservation experiences that foster lifelong environmental stewardship.

Tree & Plant Sale

Kent Conservation District continued advancing local reforestation and habitat restoration efforts through strong community participation. Private landowners planted 9,656 trees purchased through our annual sale, increasing canopy cover and improving long-term soil and water health across the county.

Through the Forest to Faucet Grant, an additional 1,953 trees were planted to strengthen riparian zones and protect drinking water resources.

Our native plant initiatives also saw meaningful growth, with 2,933 native plants installed to support pollinators, stabilize soils, and enhance biodiversity. Together, these efforts reflect a community-wide commitment to building a healthier, more resilient landscape for future generations.



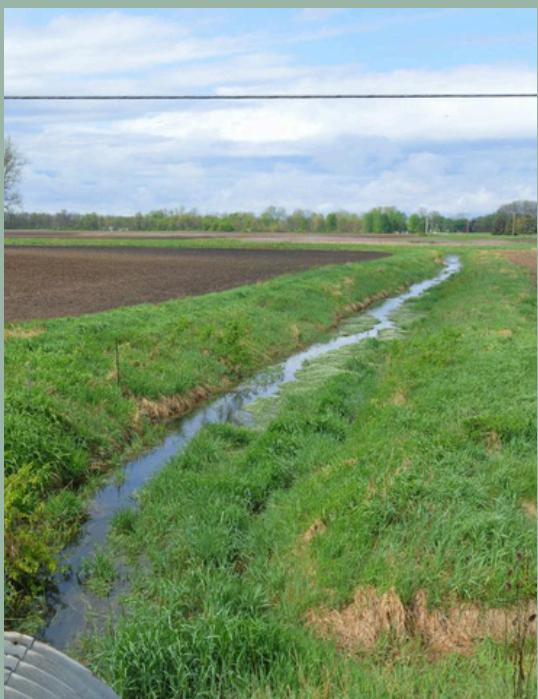
Invasive Species

Control and Habitat Assistance Across Kent County

The Kent Strike Team advanced invasive species control and habitat restoration across West Michigan, completing 561 treatment projects—nearly 600 football fields of impacted land—across Kent and Montcalm Counties. The team reached the halfway point of its Wildlife Habitat Grant project at the Rogue River State Game Area, protecting sensitive wetlands and enhancing 330 acres of mixed forest habitat. Community engagement grew significantly, with 300+ landowners signing service waivers and 80+ receiving no-cost consultations. Outreach also remained strong, with 35 educational events that expanded awareness and supported proactive land stewardship throughout the region.



Watershed & Soil Stewardship



The District has continued to implement several watershed specific projects with support from the Michigan Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. In the Rogue River Watershed, we partnered to plant 100s more native plant plugs and trees at several riparian sites near Rockford and Sparta, and installed 10,500 ft of filter strips along ditches in agricultural fields using our no till drill. In the Mill Creek watershed, we have been doing monitoring to understand algal blooms in Cranberry Lake, and working with landowners and lake residents to install erosion and nutrient pollution prevention practices. Our No Till Drill rental program assisted 12 producers this year installing conservation practices on around 120 acres of ground, ranging from native prairie, pollinator habitat, cover crops, pasture and hay seedings, and filter strips.

Natural Resources

Conservation Service

The USDA Farm Bill offers Kent County residents financial assistance to implement conservation practices for landowners to conserve working agricultural lands, wetlands, grasslands, and forestlands. For our Kent County landowners in 2025, the District serviced 50 active Farm Bill Program contracts which will help improve soil health on cropland, increase pollinator habitat, reduce sedimentation in our waterways, and improve the diversity of our forestlands by implementing a wide array of best management practices. Of these 50 contracts, there are 12 EQIP, 25 CSP, 7 RCPP and 6 RCPP-EQIP that total \$1,914,501.29 in obligated funds on 5,765.25 acres of land.



Conservation Technical Assistance Initiative (CTAI)



Katie L. Droscha, CTAI Soil Conservationist, worked with 67 landowners in 2025, including 30 in Kent County and 37 in Ottawa County. She helped enroll 1,178 new acres, contracted \$476,891.00 in new conservation practices, and processed \$89,089.00 in existing conservation practices within Ottawa County. Katie continues to diligently promote a variety of Farm Bill Programs. In Kent County, she assisted with 30 contracts—including 9 EQIP, 12 CSP, 4 RCPP, and 5 RCC-EQIP contracts—impacting a total of 4,351 acres and contracting \$556,675, with support from KCD staff.

MAEAP

Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Programs

Since joining KCD in October 2024, Conservation Technician Michael Ewing has made significant progress delivering both the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) and the Regenerative Agriculture Program (RAP). Over the past year, Michael worked closely with 23 farms and forestland owners, providing technical guidance tailored to each operation's conservation goals. He completed 21 detailed Risk Assessments, conducted 58 on-site visits, and facilitated 17 System Verifications, helping producers implement proven conservation practices.

Altogether, these efforts resulted in 100 documented Risk Reductions in 2025, strengthening environmental stewardship, protecting natural resources, and supporting a more sustainable agricultural landscape across Kent County.

Recycling Project

Through coordinated Spring and Fall collection events, we gathered and recycled nearly 5,500 pounds of agricultural plastic. This collaboration between farmers, community partners, and KCD reduced waste and supported more sustainable agricultural operations across Kent County.

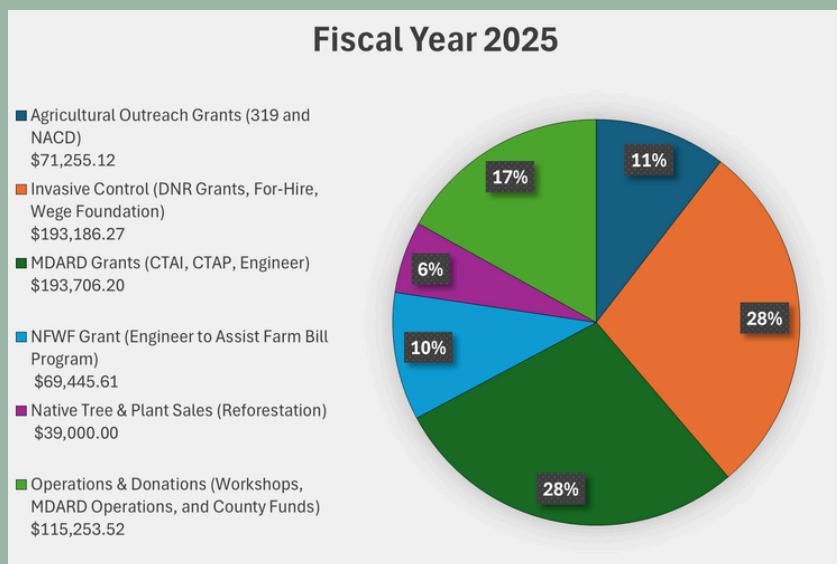


NFWF Engineer

Over the past year, the NFWF Engineer provided extensive technical support across Kent County, advancing a wide range of conservation-focused engineering projects. Throughout the year, the engineer completed surveys for 5 wetlands, 4 pipelines, 1 roof run-off system (RRO), 3 agrichemical handling facilities (AHF), 1 underground outlet (UGO), 3 on-farm secondary containment systems (OFSC), 2 grassed waterways (GWW), 1 stream crossing, and 1 grade stabilization structure. Inspections further strengthened project quality and compliance, encompassing 3 AHF systems, 2 livestock pipelines, 3 subgrades, 4 rebar installations, 5 concrete pours, 1 grassed waterway, 1 waste storage facility (WSF-C), 1 RRO, and 1 UGO. In addition, the engineer contributed to the design phase of key projects, including 1 energy efficiency upgrade, 3 AHF systems, 4 OFSC structures, and 1 GWW, while completing 15 total project reviews. This technical support ensured that conservation practices were effectively planned, constructed, and verified throughout the county.



Revenue



In FY25, Kent Conservation District generated \$681,856.72 in revenue through a combination of competitive grants, contracted services, and its bi-annual native tree and plant sales that support local reforestation efforts. This diverse funding base enabled KCD to continue delivering high-quality conservation programs while strengthening community engagement. NRCS, a long-established partner of the District, continued to provide technical assistance and in-kind support—including office space—further enhancing KCD's capacity to serve the community. To show appreciation, KCD spotlights its sponsors on the District's website and across social media channels.

KCD Impact Snapshot



K-12 Students:
200



Volunteer Hours:
45,480



Events Offered:
32



School
Partners:
5



Riparian Buffers
157,500 sq ft



MAEAP
21 assessments • 58 site visits
17 verifications • 100 risk
reductions



Ag Plastic Recycled
5,500 lbs



Native Plants Planted
14,542



No-Till Drill
12 producers • 120 acres



Strike Team Treatments
600 football fields
561 projects



Farm Bill
40 landowners • 18 applications
874 acres

Healthy Soils = Healthy Foods = Healthy People = Healthy Environment = Healthy Michigan = Healthy Planet

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