



# Annual Report - Fiscal Year 2018

## Board of Directors

Jerry Miller - Chair  
James DeYoung - Vicechair  
Jessica Vail - Treasurer  
Collin Crumbach - Director  
Tristan Versluis - Director  
Nancy Benner - Associate  
John Lemmenes - Associate  
Jen Howell - Associate  
Phil Weber - Associate

## Staff

**Matthew Soehnel**  
District Conservationist, NRCS  
matthew.soehnel@mi.usda.gov

**Katie Droscha**  
CTAI - Soil Conservationist  
katie.droscha@mi.nacdnet.net

**Bill Lindberg**  
MAEAP Technician  
bill.lindberg@macd.org

**Lexi Feutz**  
CTAI - Engineer  
lexi.feutz@macd.org

**Nick Sanchez**  
District Forester  
nick.sanchez@macd.org

**Jess Dake**  
Conservation Coordinator  
kentstriketeam@gmail.com

**Emily Lawson-Bulten**  
NFWF - Engineer  
emilyl.lawson-bulten@macd.org

**Jessie Schulte**  
District Administrator  
jessie.schulte@macd.org

## Kent Conservation District

3260 Eagle Park Dr. NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49525  
616-942-4111 ext. 4

[www.kentconservation.org](http://www.kentconservation.org)  
[Facebook.com/KentCDGRMI](https://www.facebook.com/KentCDGRMI)



*Kent Conservation District's mission is to protect and enhance the natural resources of Kent County through voluntary programs available for private landowners in rural and urban areas, such as: habitat restoration assistance, MAEAP verification, Farm Bill Programs, and technical assistance to all landowners.*

## Natural Resources Conservation Service

The USDA Farm Bill, administered by NRCS, offers conservation practices and easement programs to eligible landowners to conserve working agricultural lands, wetlands, grasslands and forestlands. In Kent County, NRCS currently has 26 active Farm Bill Program contracts being administered from the Grand Rapids Field Office. This includes 19 active EQIP contract, 5 RCPP-EQIP contracts, and 2 active CSP contracts, for a total of \$525,150 in obligated conservation funds. During 2018, NRCS also worked towards acquiring another preserved farmland property (measuring 67 acres) through the ACEP—Agricultural Land Easement program.

## Wood is Good!



Your District Forester, Nick Sanchez, assisted 99 private landowners on over 4,423 acres resulting in 87 referrals for forest management plans and sustainable timber harvests. Let your friends and neighbors know about this service. Over half of Michigan's forests are owned by private landowners like you. Let's talk about how to keep them healthy and productive!

## Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program



MAEAP is a stamp of approval from the state, showing that an agricultural operation is doing its due diligence to protect the environment. Our new MAEAP technician, Bill Lindberg, is happy to share that at end of 2018, Kent County had 28 MAEAP verified farms, comprised of 51 individual system verifications. Many more farms have completed MAEAP's on-farm risk assessment and are currently working towards verification.

## National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Grant

Near the end of 2018 KCD was awarded a 3-year grant by the NFWF, through the Protecting Our Mid and West Michigan Soil and Water Resources Through Engineering Support project. This grant provides funds to hire another engineer (Emily Lawson-Bulten), and will further KCD's mission, benefitting Kent County.

## Show Your Support for Healthy Land - Mark Your 2019 Calendars

Wednesday, **March 13th** - Kent Conservation District Annual Showcase and dinner  
Saturday, **May 4th & 25th** - Native Trees & Shrubs Sale, and Native Plant Sale  
Sign-up at [kentconservation.org](http://kentconservation.org). Inquires can e-mail: [KCD@macd.org](mailto:KCD@macd.org)

## Habitat Restoration & Technical Assistance



To educate residents on using local plants to support pollinators and a healthy ecosystem, KCD presented two “Transforming Your Yard with Native Plants” workshops in 2018. KCD also held three native plant sales, providing a resource for ecosystem restoration, and provided several Groundswell place-based environmental learning schools with advice on native plant selection/installation and invasive species identification and control.

## Cooperative Invasive Species Management

The KCD Strike Team was able to treat 437 invasive species sites; treating swallow-wort, hogweed, Japanese knotweed, and oriental bittersweet. The team hosted an aquatic landing blitz, 16 unique outreach sessions, and surveyed 850 acres. A two-year Wege Foundation grant, awarded to KCD, will help continue this work.

## Conservation Technical Assistance Initiative (CTAI)

Katie L. Droscha (CTAI Soil Conservationist) worked with 65 landowners during 2018; 40 in Kent County and 25 in Ottawa County. Katie helps to manage active NRCS contracts and works with new Farm Bill Program applications. Katie has assisted with 15 new applications in 2018, and is diligently helping to promote the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

Lexi Feutz (CTAI Engineer) worked with 45 farms throughout Southwest Michigan (19 counties) during 2018. In Kent County alone she worked with 18 farms on planning, design, and construction of engineered conservation practices. She provided conservation technical assistance in 12 Kent County townships, and has been working to promote the RCPP.

**Revenue:** KCD receives no funding through the County but earns a substantial portion of its revenues through its tree sales. Currently, KCD receives two grants through MDARD which cover the MAEAP and CTAI programs, and a grant through NFWF which covers another engineer. NRCS provides in-kind services, such as use of office space. Sponsors are recognized in our newsletters and on our social media outlets. Your gift qualifies as a charitable deduction under IRC 170 (a)(1). Our tax-exempt number is 38-2134644.

**When communities work together, great things happen!**

## Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

The Indian Mill Creek and Rogue River Watersheds have been awarded a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). This program, titled “Lower Grand River Watershed Habitat Restoration and Farmland Conservation”, establishes \$2.8 million of funding to be used in the implementation of conservation practices to improve water quality. This five-year program, which began in 2018, addresses key elements in the Indian Mill Creek and Rogue River watershed management plans, and will lead to measurable reductions in sediment and agricultural pollutants entering the two watersheds by increasing the number of agronomic practices (nutrient management, conservation cover in orchards, residue and tillage management, cover crops, filter strips, etc.) and long-lasting conservation practices (i.e., engineered practices, forest stand improvement, critical area plantings, streambank stabilization, native pollinator habitat, etc.) within the two watersheds. Conservation practices are administered through the Grand Rapids Field Office, here KCD is co-located with NRCE. The field office staff is tasked with enrolling landowners into the RCPP program and expanding public awareness of conservation practices to improve water quality.

