

Annual Report

**BENZIE COUNTY
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

2011

NOVEMBER 17, 2011

Our Mission:

To promote responsible use of natural resources in our community by providing leadership, information and services.

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Building Momentum ...

Today, October 5, with the sun out and the temps around 70, it's hard to ignore what we have here. On a day like today the majesty of our natural resources is front and center – and that majesty is the object of our attention.

2011 has been a good year. The Benzie Conservation District is winding up a year that has seen much progress related to its function: acting as stewards for our local, natural environment. Our expanded education outreach, as well as technical assistance outreach is enhanced thanks to the ability to hire solid, competent staff.

Some of the highlights include: making headway on the development of watershed plans, providing education outreach on a variety of topics and issues, getting a county-wide resolution passed addressing Phragmites, and actually treating that common, invasive reed to keep it from creating a monoculture where biodiversity is meant to thrive.

And still, there is much work to be done. We need to do a better job of reaching out to the agricultural community so they are aware of programs and dollars that can be used for sustaining their good practices. We also need to more thoroughly explore grant options in an effort to bring projects into the District that will encourage protection of our resources. We will also look to expand our education outreach with no-cost or low-cost workshops, forums and other presentations. Finally, the millage that you helped pass last August allows us to keep our doors open for staffing and building operations and we thank you for that. On the flip side, we still need funding for building improvements and expanding services so watch for more fund raising events in 2012.

With all this, we're just getting started and it's vital that we keep the momentum going. With your support and encouragement, we can do that. The Conservation District will continue to work to conserve and protect what we all enjoy and cherish. And, as always, your support is greatly appreciated.

All the Best,



*“The nation
that destroys its
soil destroys
itself”*

*Franklin D. Roosevelt,
1932*

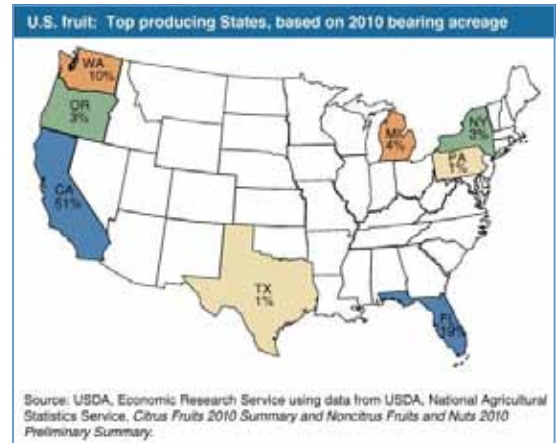


**Invasive Species Coordinator,
Liz Padalino**

Agriculture

It was a mixed-bag year for Benzie County this year. The killing frost in May took out 50 percent of the cherries, depending on where the orchards were in the landscape. Some farmers had great crops. Some did not.

Overall, it was a great growing season. July and August were dry, but we had good temperatures. The row crops such as corn, soybeans and wheat had an average to good yield, with excellent prices thanks to the flooding and drought in other parts of the country, increasing the demand for corn and wheat. Strawberries, peaches and pears did well and we had a bumper-crop year for apples. In fact, the forecast is 1.10 billion pounds, up 86 percent from last year.



Invasives

A report by Liz Padalino, Coordinator
Northwest Michigan Cooperative Weed Management Area

Invasive species really took a hit in Benzie County this year, thanks to the hard work of committed partners and volunteers. CWMA partners removed over 1,600 bags of garlic mustard, an invasive plant that crowds out native species in forest ecosystems. Many of these bags found their way to the May Farm, where the garlic mustard was dumped into the chicken coop. The chickens seemed to like having the fresh greens in early spring, and our sincere thanks goes out to the Mays for providing a place with which to dispose of this pesky plant.

The invasive wetland grass, Phragmites was another major focus species for the CWMA in Benzie County this year. Working with the Conservation District, County Commissioners, Friends of the Betsie Bay, and other local groups, a resolution in support of Phragmites control was passed by the county. Due to the diligent planning and organizational expertise on behalf of local groups, seven Phragmites removal projects took place in Benzie County this fall, with funding help coming from the CWMA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant.

Visit the Northwest Michigan CWMA website to find out about upcoming projects, educational opportunities, and miscellaneous invasive species news at www.garlic-mustard.org.

Education and Outreach

We've hosted several major education events this past year.

In December, it was the Wind Forum consisting of a five member panel of experts presenting information both pro and con with regard to industrial wind development in the county.

We invited home and business owners to consider Rain gardens for landscaping, which handles storm water run-off, at the first Benzie County Water Festival in

February.

In April, Tad Peacock and Steve Fouch from MSU-Extension presented information about the life cycle of the Forest Tent Caterpillar as well as the management options

After inviting Dr. David Roberts from MSU for a community education program in May, we implemented the *Emerald Ash Borer Community Preparedness Plan* provided by the DNR, which includes identifying and tagging ash

trees in the community and advice on the ash management plan.

Two workshops for lake owners on Natural Shoreline Landscapes were presented by MSU-Extension and Plant It Wild, with Mike Jones, BCD Environmental Outreach Coordinator, assisting. The guidebook is available for \$25 at the BCD office.

Thanks to the Record Patriot for helping us keep the community informed about our activities.



The wind forum hosted by the BCD started community dialogue

New Services: Nitrate Testing and Flow Water Probe

- Home owners with well water can have their drinking water tested for nitrates and nitrites. This test is especially advised for parents of infants and pregnant and nursing mothers. The BCD staff is prepared to administer a simple water test and interpret immediate results. The screening is specifically for private drinking water wells only. High levels in drinking water are known to cause the 'Blue Baby

Syndrome', which occurs mostly in babies six months or younger. Interference from the nitrates of the baby's immature oxygen carrying capacity system can cause severe illness or death.

- Thanks to a generous donor, a global flow water probe is available for any individual or organization interested in monitoring their river and stream flow or the volume of water enter-

ing a lake. The Flow Water Probe is a rugged and highly accurate water velocity instrument ideal for storm and water run-off studies, sewer flow measurements, measuring flows in rivers and streams, and monitoring water velocity in ditches and canals.

**"Conservation is the state of harmony between man and land."
Aldo Leopold**

Forestry Service



The ash die-off in Benzie is due to the Emerald Ash Borer

“No wonder of science has yet shown man that he can survive without continuous and intensifying attention to the protection and further development of the basic natural resources of his environment.”
D. Harper Simms 1970

The United States ranks fourth on the list of most forest-rich countries, following the Russian Federation, Brazil, and Canada, with 8 percent of the world's primary forest. In 2006, almost 8 percent of US forests or approximately 58 million acres, were at significant risk from insect and disease mortality, according to the Society of American Foresters.

The health of Benzie County's hardwood forest is yet to be determined. The invasive emerald ash borer is causing a great deal of loss to our ash trees and is changing the forest landscape. Reports from the Michigan Department of Agriculture say the EAB will take it all, unless the EAB population collapses, and foresters aren't seeing that happening. The District's Environmental Outreach Coordinator, Mike Jones, has coordinated ash inventories for the City of Frankfort along with Frankfort/Elberta High School seniors, Congregational Summer Assembly, and Michigan Shores Cooperative. We expect to hear from other communities asking for assistance with their ash inventory after making presentations throughout the county.

“The outlook is grim except for those who choose to treat,” says local forester Paul Drysdale of Drysdale Forestry & Consulting in Cadillac. His recommendation for landscape tree owners is to, “..start early (treatment) before the EAB gets into the tree and maintain diligent practices for keeping a tree healthy.”

Beech Bark scale is another threat to our forest ecosystem. The feathery-white scale has been spotted in the Crystal Mountain area and other locations in the county, as well. There are perhaps one to two percent of all beech trees resistant to the disease.

Asian long-horned beetle? How can we keep it out? Everything comes into shipping ports on wood pallets, a huge part of our timber industry. The main cause of the spreading of these alien insects is moving firewood and the beetle is in Chicago and Ohio at this time. Recommendations for using firewood: cover up your wood pile with plastic and let it sit one year, depriving insects of a food source and escape.

Our plan for the District's Maley property, 151 acres of mostly red pine, is moving forward with a professionally developed management plan. The District is contracting with a forester to write this plan and prepare for a timber sale for 50 acres of the scotch pine, an invasive, located in the tract. We are also talking about using this land as a potential education center for outdoor education. This is a parcel of land that is open to the public; please call the District office for directions on how to get there.

Fiscal Year Finances 2010-2011

REVENUE

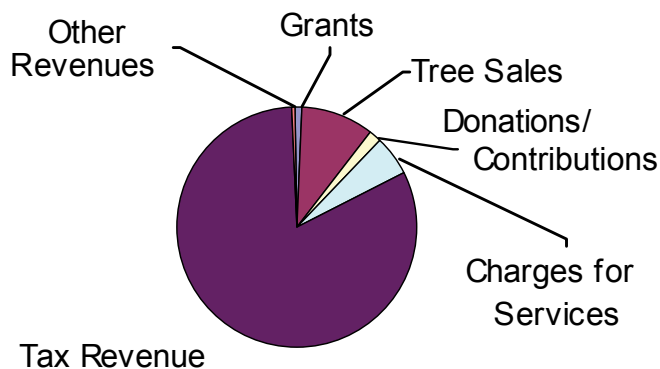
	<u>FY 2010</u>	<u>FY 2011</u>
Grants	\$875	\$ 825
Tree Sales	\$11,800	\$12,842
Donations/ Contributions	\$1,703	\$2,741
Charges for Services	\$3,229	\$4,510
Tax Revenue	-0-	\$108,323
<u>Other Revenues</u>	<u>\$2, 201</u>	<u>\$3,596</u>
Total Revenue	\$19,808	\$132,837

EXPENSES

	<u>FY 2010</u>	<u>FY 2011</u>
General Operations	\$37,885	\$99,081
<u>Cost of Goods</u>	<u>\$6,203</u>	<u>\$9,487</u>
Total Expenses	\$44,048	\$108,568

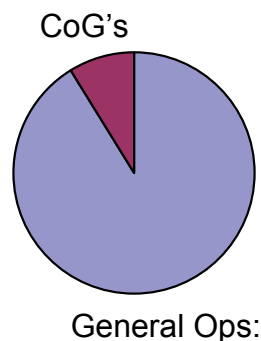
Revenue Percentages

Grants	0.70%
Tree Sales	10%
Donations/Contributions	2%
Charges for Services	5%
Tax Revenue	82%
Other Revenues	0.30%



Expense Percentages

General Ops:	91%
CoG's	9%



STAKEHOLDERS SURVEY 2011

Dear Respondent,

This survey requests your opinion on the value of the natural resources to Benzie County. We seek your insights about how we should use the methods for protection, enhancement and growth for the future of our natural resources.

1. The District's mission is to encourage and assist the people of Benzie County in preserving, managing and enhancing Benzie County's natural resources through services, education and demonstrations. Is the District succeeding in that mission?

Yes No No opinion

In statements 2 through 14 please indicate your agreement to the statement as presented.

Rate the following according to your opinion.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. The forestry natural resource is important to Benzie County

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. Farmland preservation is important in Benzie County

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. Surface water quality in Benzie County is important

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Soil erosion in Benzie County is important

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. Air quality in Benzie County is a concern

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. Invasive species of plants, animal, and aquatics in Benzie County are a problem

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. Wildlife habitat in Benzie County is important

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. Sand dune protection in Benzie County is important

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. Natural resource education in Benzie County is important

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. Ground water quality in Benzie County is important

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. Reforestation/woodlot management in Benzie County is a concern

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. Recycling in Benzie County is important

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. Alternative energy in Benzie County is important

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. I own property in Benzie County Yes No

15. The total acreage of the property I own in Benzie County is

1 acre or less more than 1 acre but less than 5 at least 5 acres but less than 20
At least 20 acres but less than 80 acres 80 acres or more

16. Other suggestions that would improve the services offered by the Benzie Conservation District (if necessary, use and attach an additional sheet):

Watershed Plans and Projects

Mike Jones, Environmental Outreach Coordinator

A watershed acts like a funnel. It is the land area that drains water to a particular stream, river, or lake. It is a land feature that can be identified by tracing a line along the highest elevations between two areas on a map, often a ridge. Water flows downhill from the drainage divide into larger streams, eventually joining a river. As more tributary streams join the river, the volume of water increases. This river eventually flows downstream into an even larger river at the confluence.

We have three watersheds in Benzie County: Herring Lakes Watershed, Platte River Watershed, and Crystal Lake/Betsie River Watershed. The sheds have the same needs for monitoring as any body of water: water quality, control of invasive species, and shoreline erosion.

Crystal Lake/Betsie River: The *Crystal Lake & Watershed Association* is working with the DNR on the completion and monitoring of the new access site near Railroad Point, off MI 15. Completion date for the site is scheduled for December, 2011. The BCD conducted the treatment for the phragmites infestation at the Crystal lake Outlet. This project was funded by the CLWA and the NW Michigan Cooperative Weed Management Association. *Friends of Betsie Bay* treated Phragmites with funding from NMCWMA and The Nature Conservancy. The BCD was also contracted to conduct water quality monitoring for Crystal Lake. This includes sampling for phosphorous, secchi disk transparency chlorophyll A, and Hydrolab profiles of temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and turbidity from the surface to 165 feet with readings every five feet. Data will be compiled on an on-going basis.

The *Betsie River Watershed Restoration Committee*, working with the Conservation Resource Alliance, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the Benzie Road Commission and the BCD, are partnering to improve three road and stream crossings. A new management plan for the Betsie River and the Grass Lake State Wildlife Management Area, written by the DNR, includes invasive plant control and is under review.

Herring Lakes Watershed: The BCD continues to coordinate activities for the Herring Lakes Watershed Steering Committee, including acting as fiduciary. The Committee conducted spring and late summer water quality monitoring at multiple sites, which included E.coli, total phosphorous, total nitrogen, and nitrate levels. Thanks to the donation of a Hydrolab, profiles were taken of both upper and lower lakes this summer. Baseline data is being compiled to compare and monitor the health of the watershed.

Platte River Watershed: The Platte Lake Improvement Association continues to conduct the most extensive monitoring throughout any watershed in the country. An updated watershed protection plan is in process, overseen by District partner, Platte River Watershed Steering Committee. The new plan will be reviewed by the DEQ in December.

Summer Interns



Samuel Hahn stands before his art, now gracing the District's alley wall.

Samuel Hahn, 2011 Benzie Central graduate, spent the summer at the District meeting people, answering phone calls, guiding Land Conservancy walks, and making our building look much better with a waterscape mural on the wall behind our office. Sam entered his freshman year at the University of Michigan, pursuing environmental studies. He reports he's working hard in his intensive Spanish class!

Paul Gerhart, interned with the Crystal Lake & Watershed Association. He is a student of Forestry and Applied Ecology at Michigan Tech's School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science. Currently, Paul is writing a report for the CLWA about forest management and the impacts of emerald ash borer and beech bark disease and restore the integrity of forest ecosystems. He is also working with the Tree Board of the City of Frankfort to design a management plan for the forest of Tank Hill.



Our Staff

Tad Peacock, Executive Director

Tad joined the BCD in May of 2008, coming from administrative positions with the State and as a local business owner. With a degree from MSU in Natural Resource Development and a drive to survive, Tad has had the opportunity to develop and expand programs and services the District now offers.

Mike Jones, Environmental Outreach Coordinator

Mike came on board this past March and has been instrumental in providing outreach and technical assistance to home and landowners. Locally raised (some would say 'organically'), with an MS in Forestry and extensive background in invasive species, Mike has been a critical addition to the BCD staff.

Carol Navarro, Administrative Assistant, Education Outreach Coordinator

Sadly we say good-bye to Carol as she transitions to a new position with a non-profit in Traverse City. She promises some volunteers hours in the future!

Our Board of Directors

Chris Cota, Board Chair

Cheryl Kobernik, Vice-Chair

Stephen Fouch, Treasurer/Secretary

Greg Kindig, Director

Ron Olson, Director



Our Partners

WHIP

Designed for rural landowners who are not engaged in agriculture. Helps with tree planting, native warm season grass plantings, and invasive species removal.

EQIP

For agriculture producers, this program assists farmers and ranchers with erosion on high traffic areas on the farm, agrichemical handling facilities, nutrient management, pest management, and seasonal high tunnels (hoop houses).

WRP

Designed to restore wetlands that were drained for agriculture. A wetland restoration project takes many years to complete.

CSP

Farmers and ranchers are the only eligible landowners for this program designed to assist in maintaining the conservations practices already implemented and to challenge them to try a new conservation techniques such soil testing scouting for crop pests, or using nutrient management.

Natural Resource Conservation Service, *Scott Hughey* *Conservation practices and programs for your land*

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency in the United States Department of Agriculture, works with private landowners to install or implement conservation practices on their land. We are an agency of resource professionals (foresters, biologist, engineers, planners, etc.) who come along side and work directly with and through your local conservation district. All assistance with NRCS is voluntary. You, as the landowner, can start and stop your interaction with NRCS at any time. Our one and only job is to educate and assist landowners with installing conservation practices. NRCS has been working with farmers, ranchers, rural landowners and conservation districts since 1935.

This year the NRCS staff worked with 17 different farmers & landowners to solve conservation resource concerns (problems) on their land. We addressed a wide variety of issues including invasive species removal, forest stand improvement, and tree & shrub planting. NRCS staff worked farmers within the Benzie Conservation District on Pest Management, including biological control of pest, and removing old orchards. We also worked with farmers on establishing plantings for native pollinators, nutrient management (*including commercial, organic fertilizers, and manure*) and establishing seasonal high tunnels (*hoop houses*) for crops. To specifically assist farmers in managing pesticides and fertilizers NRCS has assisted many farmers with installing agri-chemical handling/storage facilities. In 2011 we assisted one farmer in Benzie County with a agri-chemical facility.

The 2008 Farm Bill provides to farmers and landowners an opportunity to offset the cost of implementing conservation practices, by providing NRCS technical staff and expertise, as well as financial assistance to offset the price tag. 14 applications were submitted from the above mentioned 17 farmers and landowners, and 5 were selected for funding in 2011. If you would like to learn more about NRCS and financial assistance through the Farm Bill, please contact the Benzie Conservation District for more information. NRCS field staff work out of the Benzie Conservation District Office on Tuesdays, or you can contact the NRCS field office in Bear Lake at 231 889.9666. or scott.hughey@mi.usda.gov

Thank You
to Our
Partners,
Supporters and
Volunteers!

Thanks to...Jordan Bates, Benzie Fishery Coalition, Crystal Lake and Watershed Association, Stacy Daniels, Roberta Dow, Frankfort Tree City USA, Ward and Margaret Griffen, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, Bill and Ann Henning, Ed Hoogterp, Friends of Betsie Bay, Jerry Heiman, Ron Heverly, Elizabeth Hill, Dave Long, Dean Luedders, Earlene Luedtke, Suz McLaughlin, Michigan Land Use Institute, MSU Extension, Bill Olsen, Ron Olson, Plant It Wild, Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore, Terry Smith, Carolyn Thayer, Dori Turner, Joan Wolfe, and many others.

We don't do this work alone!



Benzie Conservation District

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Www.benziecd.org

We make caring for the environment easy for you!

The Benzie Conservation District's 66th Annual Meeting



Keynote Speaker:

Mark Breederland

*Extension Educator,
Michigan Sea Grant Extension*

“Asian Carp and Lake Michigan: Risks and Realities 2011”

Mark Breederland is District Extension Educator for the Michigan Sea Grant College, serving Northwest Lower Michigan and Southeast Michigan districts since 1995. He collaborates with the many federal/state/local agencies and communities on a variety of Great Lakes environmental conservation projects. His work has been recognized by the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network Programs Leaders (Outstanding Program Award, April 2000) and MSU Extension (The John Hannah Award, Oct 2004). Mark is a native of southeast Michigan with a B.S. (Biology/Environmental Science) from Taylor University, Upland, Indiana and a M.S. (Environmental Science) from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

Please join us for the
**Benzie Conservation District's
66th Annual Meeting**
Thursday, Nov. 17, 2011
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Crystal Mountain Resort and Spa
Light refreshments served

Please RSVP by
November 14
benziecd@benziecd.org
231.882.4391