



Great Blue Heron on Portage Lake by Al Taylor



June 2015 Newsletter

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Changes in Conservation Planning Sign-up Procedure

Changes in the way that landowners apply for conservation programs are now being put in place at the USDA. Under the new policy, private landowners interested in NRCS conservation programs (such as EQIP and CSP) and a conservation plan will now need to sign up no later than June 12, 2015. The sign-up process involves filling out and submitting Form 1200 prior to the deadline. Conservation planning identifies resource concerns on farm and forest land and helps landowners obtain USDA financial assistance to address them. It is "the first step in obtaining financial assistance from the USDA for a wide variety of conservation practices," said USDA State Conservationist Garry Lee. "Farmers and private forest owners who sign-up [by June 12] will [still] receive free conservation planning from USDA conservationists during 2015." For more information, please call 231-889-9666 and ask for Scott Hughey.

Welcome to our **June 2015 newsletter**. Please make note of our **\$1.00 off coupon** for wildflower, milkweed, and grass seed mix through the month of June. And if you'd like to receive an online version of our inbox, please call (231-889-9666) or send an email to susan.spencer@macd.org. Have a splendid month!

TEAMING UP TO GIVE POLLINATORS AND NATIVE HABITATS A CHANCE

Pollinator loss has reached critical levels...

and here at the Manistee Conservation District, we're working to do something about it. National Pollinator Week is June 15th through the 21st this year. In recognition of this event, the Manistee Conservation District recently proposed a unique partnership with the Manistee



County Road Commission to set aside a plot of land for the establishment of a large, natural native pollinator habitat. The parcel, located on US-31 just north of the Manistee Conservation District property, has been approved by the Road Commission for a one-of-a-kind experiment designed to transform the parcel from an invasive species-infested plot to a thriving pollinator habitat. Currently, the area is heavily overgrown with spotted knapweed, an aggressive, particularly destructive invasive species. Unfortunately, knapweed is very attractive to honey bees. Thus, performing a chemical treatment of the parcel may put pollinators at risk. With this concern in mind, the MCD has proposed a plan which, over the next two years, aims to naturally eliminate the knapweed infestation through the use of cover crops, crops which will produce a large enough biomass to sufficiently crowd out the knapweed without the need for chemicals. The project's ambitions are two-fold. One, we are looking to demonstrate the use of no-till drill technology and the numerous benefits of using cover crops to increase soil health. Two, we aim to cultivate a thriving natural, native wildflower habitat on the parcel that will not only be environmentally safe for pollinators, but will also be aesthetically pleasing to county residents. For more information, please contact Susan Spencer, MCD Administrator, or Scott Hughey NRCS District Conservationist, at 231-889-9666.

Join Us & Plant a Pollinator Habitat in Your Back Yard



In observance of **National Pollinator Week**, which is **June 15th - June 21st** this year, we are inviting all Manistee residents to consider **planting**

a small pollinator garden in your yard or even on larger parcels of land. Wildflower and milkweed seed can be purchased online directly from the Manistee Conservation District **website store**. A little seed goes a long way in helping to create pollinator-friendly habitats, and it can be done right in your back yard.

Keep abreast of oak wilt news and other forest disease updates

Please check the MCD website's forestry pages regularly at <http://www.manisteed2.org/forestry-updates-and-news.html> for updates on forest diseases, blackout times for transporting cut oak, and other important information.

See Coupon Ad Below

Don't forget to check out our online store at www.manisteed2.org, and take advantage of our coupon on wildflower, grass, and other seed this month.

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION COST SHARE FOR 2015

Great news for farmers interested in organic certification and those recently certified. Cost-share funds to assist with the costs of organic certification are now being made available.



On Thursday, May 14, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the availability of approximately \$11.9 million in funding for organic certification cost-share assistance for organic producers and handlers through state departments of agriculture. Payments for certification-related expenses incurred from October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015 can cover up to 75 percent of an individual producer's or handler's certification costs, up to a maximum of \$750 per certification. To find out more about the programs, visit the following website: http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/nocccsp-2015/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+SustainableAgricultureCoalition+%28National+Sustainable+Agriculture+Coalition+%28NSAC%29%29

NEW MAEAP VERIFICATIONS FOR MANISTEE COUNTY



The Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assistance Program (MAEAP) benefits farms, farmers, their neighbors, and the environment.

Because it encourages best practices in farming and agriculture, MAEAP verification can protect farmers in the areas of safe food, responsible chemical storage, livestock, cropping and homesteading assessments.

Recently, three MAEAP verifications were awarded to Manistee area farms. Allen and Corrine Grossnickle, of Grossnickle Farms in Kaleva, received both Farm *A*Syst and Crop*A*Syst verifications. David Smeltzer received a Crop*A*Syst verification. To learn more about the MAEAP verification process, contact Murray Stall, MAEAP technician for Mason-Lake and Manistee Conservation Districts at 231-757-3708.

Visit Our Website Today!!

www.manisteed2.org

Save \$1.00

**On All Wildflower, Milkweed, and Grass Seed mixes
Order seeds [online](#) and enter the coupon code **SEEDS** at checkout**

Please Note: *All orders will need to be picked up at the district. Please call ahead 231-889-9666, ext. 3*

Offer Expires: June 30, 2015