

BENZIE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



2018 ANNUAL REPORT

*Our mission is to preserve & enhance the
natural resources of Benzie County*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Chair



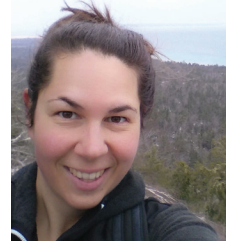
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Jamie Robinson
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*A Huge Thank You
to Our Partners,
Supporters, &
Volunteers!*



280 SOUTH BENZIE BOULEVARD
POST OFFICE BOX 408
BEULAH, MICHIGAN 49617
231.882.4391
WWW.BENZIECD.ORG

DISTRICT NEWS: *Perpetually Changing*

“The only thing that is constant is change.” That’s the rough translation of what was meant by the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus of Ephesus (circa 500 BCE), when he said, “Life is flux” (*Panta Rhei* in Greek, meaning everything or all things change).

And so it is here at the Benzie Conservation District some 2,500 years later – the only thing constant around here is that we’re changing all the time! And with a little luck and a lot of hard work, we’re evolving a bit, too.

Three months ago in August marked the third time in eight years that we’ve asked for, and received with your support, a millage. With that vital financial shot in the arm, we’ve been able to leverage the tax dollars you’ve generously appropriated, for more money in the form of grants, donations and revenue from services. As evidence, our revenue in FY2010 was \$19,808. In FY2018, it was \$254,488! Aside from leveraging dol-

lars for more dollars, we’re able to offer a wide variety of activities to the public, all with the goal of exposing, educating and entertaining you on the wonders and importance of Benzie County’s great outdoors.

Check out our 2018 Schedule of Events on our website; they’ll be new and improved in 2019!

Everything might be in flux, but one thing is for sure: we’re all in this together. And I am committed to utilizing your tax dollars in the wisest, most productive way to preserve and enhance the natural resources of Benzie County. Thank you!

All the best,



Tad Peacock, Executive Director



Clockwise from left: Volunteers take extra steps to reach trash on the Betsie River Clean Sweep. Students enjoy a lesson on the Great Lakes at the CSA Ecology Fun Day. AIS team blasts invasives off a fishing boat. A group of students from area churches help clean up Elberta beach for the Adopt-A-Beach program.



INVASIVE SPECIES NETWORK *by Katie Grzesiak*

2018 was an incredibly productive year for the Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network (ISN) as we continued protecting, enhancing, and promoting northwest Michigan's natural communities through terrestrial invasive plant management and outreach.

Our projects for the fiscal year (October 2017 to September 2018) have wrapped up to great success, with work in Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Manistee counties. Funding through the US Forest Service, US EPA (both grants from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative), Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, and the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (through the Quality of Life departments MDNR, MDEQ, and MDARD) enabled ISN to accomplish a lot. Donations and cost-share funds made even more projects possible (thank you!).

As usual, spring saw us scrambling in the woods after garlic mustard. Workbees and lunches in each county were a fun experience to get people involved in invasive species management. For the first time, ISN was able to work with local partners and the US Forest Service to place garlic mustard dumpsters in every county in ISN's service area for landowners to safely dispose of the invasive plant outside of workbee times. Special shout-outs to the City of Frankfort, Lake Township (Benzie), Leelanau Conservancy, Manistee Conservation District, and Grand Traverse Conservation District for hosting those dumpsters!

ISN also had a special opportunity to collaborate with artist Jane Kramer to not only showcase her beautiful Foreshadowing series at the Grand Traverse Conservation District, but to host a series of paper-making events! Attendees of the open-house were able to learn about Jane's process and inspirations. The following day, a limited class size worked side-by-side with Jane to make archival-quality paper from garlic mustard harvested in ISN's service area. ISN believes that art is a great way to communicate with the public, and Jane offered a fantastic new window to create and learn at the same time.

We continued workbees throughout the summer, partnering with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy to focus on baby's breath at Elberta Beach in Benzie County. It's amazing how much of a difference a group of volunteers can make—the beach is looking so much better. Contact Katie at 231.941.0960 x 29; kgrzesiak@gtcd.org.



Left: Baby's breath workbee at Elberta Beach. Below: Emily Cook, Outreach Specialist with ISN, teaches Frankfort 6th graders at the Crystal Lake Walkabout. Students learned how invasive species, like autumn olive, can harm the environment.



ISN in 2017:

- Surveyed nearly 1,000 acres of high-quality habitats for Top 20 invasive species at over 400 sites
- Restored over 30 acres with native plants
- Treated over 700 acres of high-priority invasive species at nearly 400 sites
- Coordinated 19 workbees and 46 other events
- Engaged nearly 80 volunteers for >170 volunteer hrs
- Contacted over 3,600 people in-person and over 488,000 using traditional & social media
- Over 350 people contacted ISN for the first time to have their questions answered
- Responded to Early Detection reports
- Black swallow-wort populations reported & treated in Kingsley
- 3 previously unrecorded non-native species county records
- Dozens of responses to mistaken reports handled over the phone/email

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES PATHWAYS *by Jane Perrino*

The Aquatic Invasive Species Pathways Project (AISPP) has completed a successful second season in the field. Program objectives were not only met, but exceeded! Our team went to public boat launches each week to decontaminate watercraft and engage recreational boaters and anglers on the subject of aquatic invasive species (AIS) transfer. This season: more than 4,000 people were educated directly, over 200,000 indirectly, and 676 boats were washed by the AISPP staff and volunteers. Overall response to boat washing and AIS prevention continues to be positive; the compliance rate average was 80%. We were pleased to have even more volunteers join us in our efforts this year. THANKS!

Besides boat launch outreach, staff provided area schools with educational events, publicly presented on AIS and spoke with numerous clubs and governmental entities. When not in the field, we strive to build a strong network of information between the counties covered.

This year's highlights include: hiring our wonderful AISPP Intern, Jamie Robinson; involvement with the "M22 Challenge," "Up North Stand-Up Paddle Classic" and "Tri Up North" races; hosting the first snorkel field trip for two Benzie County high school classes; and presenting about the program at the Michigan Inland Lakes Conference in Grand Rapids.

This program is currently funded through the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program, with supporting grants through the Benzie Sunrise Rotary Foundation, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, and Manistee County Planning Department. Another full season behind us, we look forward to protecting our beautiful waters in 2019! Contact Jane at 231.882.4391; or email, jane@benziecd.org.



Summer Intern Jamie Robinson, and AIS Educator, Jodi Monteith, wash SUP's in Crystal Lake's race at Beulah Beach. This was a great outreach opportunity with more than 100 racers from all over the country.

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES PATHWAYS PROJECT 2018



676 BOATS WASHED
2,800 BOATERS ENGAGED
+200,000 PUBLIC EDUCATED

21 LAKES & STREAMS VISITED
4 COUNTIES
12 SPECIAL EVENTS & RACES



31 VOLUNTEERS

Thank you, dedicated stewards!

TOP 5 STATES

our boaters hail from:

- Michigan
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Ohio



18 STATES TOTAL

- Mississippi!

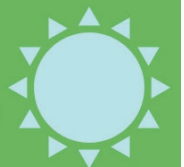


80% COMPLIANCE

We had a high rate of boat wash acceptance with our region's boaters

2 DAYS DRY

Average length of time between boating excursions, amongst boaters



FORESTRY UPDATE *by Kama Ross*

The Forestry Assistance Program has been more active in Benzie County over the past year for five main reasons explained below.

1: A special mailing targeted county landowners, with 20 or more acres, who did not receive the primary residency exemption on their annual property taxes and therefore might be interested in the Qualified Forest Program (QFP). The purpose of QFP is to encourage private forestland owners to manage their land in an economically viable and environmentally sustainable manner. Property may then be eligible for a 16-mill reduction in annual property taxes and land is exempt from uncapping or “pop-up” of taxable value when transferred or sold. The mailing resulted in new forested properties being enrolled in QFP.

2: Many new oak wilt pockets were confirmed in Benzie County in 2018, with the Lake Ann area being very hard hit with the non-native fungus killing our red oak trees. Also, the first oak wilt was confirmed on the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore along Lake Michigan Drive and another new site on the Betsie Valley Trail off Mollineaux Road. Both will be treated this fall and hopefully help control the spread to neighboring properties. One Almira Township landowner rented a backhoe to complete a treatment plan we laid out and another has hired a local tree service to complete a comprehensive control plan. Now is the time to safely prune your oak trees, but remember to stop any work on or around your oaks by April 15th, when the picnic beetles (which transport the killer fungus) once again are active.

3: Continue to monitor the infestation of scale insects and development of cankers on your beech trees. This summer, we experienced a lot of yellowing and thinning of beech crowns and many failures with classic “beech snap.” As trees become stressed from the scale feeding and as cankers develop anywhere on the trunk, these trees are very hazardous and it is hard to predict when the top of the tree will come down. Connecting with a reputable tree service or certified arborist to help assess the risk to home/property and possible treatment options, is highly recommended.

4: Changes in local markets continue to influence our ability to sustainably manage our forest resources in the county. North America’s largest particle-board operations just began accepting a wide variety of low grade quality species from a 75-mile radius of the Grayling Mill. Hopefully, in the years to come, local loggers and sawmills will be able to sell wood and help

FY2017-18 Benzie County

- 85 office initial contacts
- 76 landowner site visits covering 2,459 acres
- 160 landowner follow-up contacts
- 25 landowner referrals to consultant and industry foresters covering 1,200 acres
- 33 regional outreach educational events reaching 1,126 area landowners
- 26 regional media occurrences (newsprint, web, radio, tv)

us do more timber stand improvement practices. Also, the burgeoning, Chinese middle class is creating strong global markets for many of our beautiful hardwood saw logs and veneer quality timber. Forests are 100% renewable if managed correctly.

5: New educational workshops and hands-on opportunities to learn more about sustainable forest management practices. Examples include: “American Chestnuts Today” on February 12th, “Pruning Trees and Shrubs” on March 23 and “Forest Mushrooms” on April 3rd. Check out the BCD website for updates and more information.

As always, my role as District Forester is to help make your forest work for you...whether it is enjoying recreational pursuits, seeking wild edibles, planting new trees and shrubs, harvesting red pine or hardwoods or enhancing the habitat for a slew of wildlife species. On-site technical assistance is provided at no charge. Let’s set up a visit this coming year! Contact Kama Ross at 231.256.9783; or email: kama.ross@macd.org.



Biochar Workshop held at Grow Benzie, featured speakers Paul May and Tim Overdier on this unique method of burning shrubs and tree waste for soil enhancement.

FISCAL YEAR FINANCES 2017 - 2018

REVENUE

Contributions/Donations	\$12,186.00
Tax Revenue	\$120,413.00
Grant Income	\$75,483.00
Tree Sales	\$15,741.00
Sales & Services	\$27,755.00
Other Revenue	\$2,910.00

TOTAL REVENUE **\$254,488.00**

EXPENSES

General Operations	\$229,017.00
Cost of Goods	\$17,263.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$246,280.00

NET ORDINARY INCOME \$8202.00

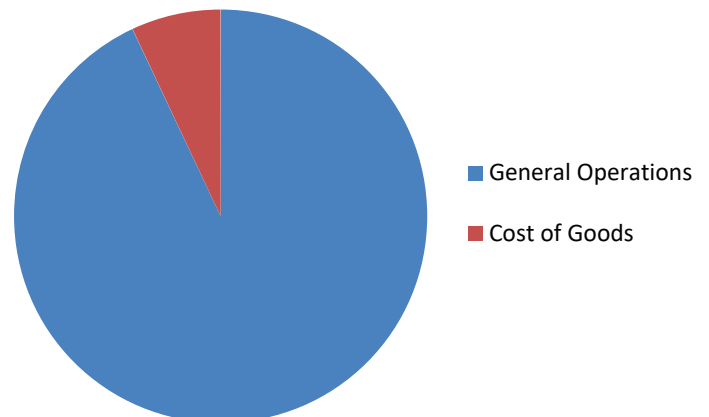
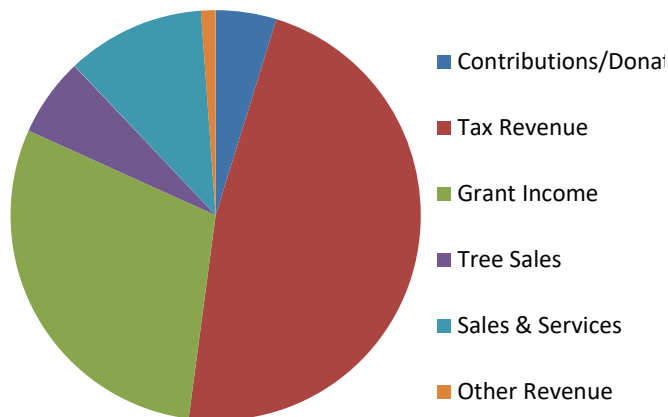
**Data above is for period October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018 and is unaudited.*

REVENUE PERCENTAGES

Grants	30%
Donations	5%
Tree sales	6%
Other sales & services	11%
Tax revenue	47%
Other revenues	1%

EXPENSE PERCENTAGES

General operations	93%
Cost of goods	7%



All the programs, workshops, and services, including walk-ins and phone calls, provided by the BCD this year directly engaged approximately 6,800+ local and visiting people!

WATERWAYS *by John Ransom*

It is no secret that the BCD is dedicated to preserving and protecting the world renowned water resources of Benzie County. In 2018, we were reminded that we are not alone in this mission. This year we had the highest turnout for our river cleanups (75 volunteers), our most popular water tour to date (44 paddlers on Little Platte Lake), and we passed our third millage by a wide margin.

We continue to work with partners and volunteers to monitor water quality throughout the county. In general the water quality in Benzie County is good; however each watershed has its issues. The BCD has been working with the Crystal Lake & Watershed Association and village of Beulah to address the E. coli and nutrient issues at Beulah beach and Cold Creek on the East end of Crystal Lake. We have partnered with the Platte Lake Improvement Association to try to track down phosphorus inputs in the Platte River, and we are working with the Upper and Lower Herring lake associations to survey and treat invasive species in their lakes.

However we are most proud of our educational programs for Benzie County students and adults alike. The most powerful way to protect our waters is to inspire everybody to be good stewards of the land and water. By getting people out on the river for a cleanup or collecting bugs, paddling down the Platte River full of salmon with a group of 7th graders or, exploring a new lake, we know we won't be alone in our mission to preserve and enhance the natural resources of Benzie County. Thank you!

MAEAP NEWS

In 2018, Team MAEAP (Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program) conducted 136 environmental risk assessments in Antrim, Benzie, Leelanau, and Grand Traverse counties. There were 42 new verifications and 40 reverifications across these four counties in FY18 bringing us to a grand total of 236 MAEAP system verifications!

Benzie County had 4 new verifications and 10 reverifications in FY18 and we are looking forward to continuing to increase these numbers in the coming years! Join along on our accomplishments throughout the year by following us on Twitter: @Team_MAEAP

BENZIE WATERS BY THE NUMBERS

The Benzie Conservation District is committed to protecting Benzie County's water resources through education, monitoring, and hands on projects.

Direct contact with **325** students
and **350** adults regarding Benzie County's water quality

446 volunteer hours from **103** volunteers participating in river cleanup and volunteer stream monitoring events

220 hours of technical assistance in water quality assessment and invasive plant treatments

Collected over **2500** water quality data points throughout the county

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE
WWW.BENZIECD.ORG/BENZIE-WATERS

EDUCATION & OUTREACH *by Aimé Merizon*

This was a very successful year for the Benzie CD! Our office served approximately 542 walk-in folks with questions about our services, seedlings sales, products that we sell, or just needed help with directions around the county. We also responded to about 714 phone queries throughout 2018.

In this modern age of social media, we find that it is so much easier to contact our community and visitors alike. On facebook alone we have thousands of post reviews and engagements, and we can reach our friends very quickly through email blasts as well. This helps us save on paper (trees), printing, and mailing costs too.

That being said, we love more than anything to reach out to folks with our events. This past year we hosted a great spring hike at the Lake Ann Pathways; it's so fun to witness people meeting for the first time and exchanging contact info by the end of the hike!

Another favorite has been the spring planting workshop, lots of landowners were eager to learn about what to plant for their gardens, lawns, and for wildlife.

In the summer months we somehow managed to fit in four beach clean ups! These are becoming more and more popular because every age can participate in a beautiful part of the county, and experience immediate gratification for a job well done.

We still have our environmental day camp, but have joined forces with the formidable Amalia Fernand of Nature Explorers. She has created a wonderful space for camps and it was a no-brainer to incorporate Nuts 4 Nature with her offerings and space. Thanks Amalia!

Late in the year, we put our heads together with locals Paul May and Tim Overdier and pulled off a very well attended Biochar Workshop, held at Grow Benzie. What is biochar? Well, we plan to bring this event back, but basically it's an ancient method of firing brush and cooling it at the right moment to make a form of charcoal that proves to be extremely nutritious for our sandy soils.

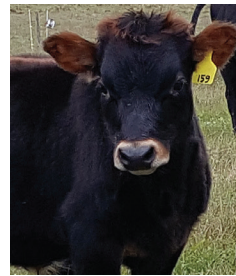
Stay tuned for more great workshops, events, and information from this lively conservation district! Contact Aimé at 231.882.4391 x 11; aime@benziecd.org.

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE *by Scott Hughey*

Since 1935 the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been "helping people help the land." Supporting America's working lands NRCS has a proud history of supporting America's farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners. For more than 80 years, we have helped people make investments in their operations and local communities to keep working lands working, boost rural economies, increase the competitiveness of American agriculture, and improve the quality of our air, water, soil, and habitat.

As the USDA's primary, private lands conservation agency we use objective, reliable science to assist our partners, and communities to make decisions about their natural resources. Through one-on-one personalized advice, we work voluntarily with producers, landowners and communities to find the best solutions to meet their unique conservation and business goals. By doing so, we help ensure the health of our natural resources and the long-term viability of American agriculture.

This year the NRCS worked with Benzie County farmers and landowners to solve conservation resource concerns on their land. Following is a list of different conservation practices that NRCS helped to implement in Benzie County during 2018.



- COVER CROPS – 208 ACRES
- CONSERVATION CROP ROTATION – 155 ACRES
- INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT – 52 ACRES
- INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVED – 161 ACRES
- FORAGE & BIOMASS PLANTING – 193 ACRES
- HIGH TUNNELS (AKA HOOP HOUSES) - 8,118 SQ.FT.
- PRESCRIBED GRAZING – 45 ACRES

NRCS assisted with 13 applications for Farm Bill Conservation Programs, 5 of those for Benzie County. Total dollar value of those funded applications is \$163,081.72, with Benzie's share being \$34,479.30 for 2018. These dollars will be used by landowners to offset the cost of implementing conservation practices in Benzie County, and by providing them with NRCS technical staff and expertise.

If you would like to learn more about NRCS and financial assistance through the Farm Bill, check out www.nrcs.usda.gov or contact the Benzie CD for more information. NRCS field staff meet with landowners and producers by appointment. To set up a time to meet and discuss your resource concerns and conservation goals, please contact the NRCS field office in Bear Lake at 231.889-9666 or by email: scott.hughey@mi.usda.gov.

BENZIE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

73rd

ANNUAL MEETING & REPORT

TUES, NOVEMBER 20TH

6:30 TO 8:30 PM @ MILLS COMMUNITY HOUSE

With guest presenter



Jo Latimore

aquatic biologist



DR. LATIMORE HELPS WITH AQUATIC PLANT IDENTIFICATION AT THE
LITTLE PLATTE LAKE WATER TOUR, JULY 2018

Enjoy tasty hors d'oeuvres catered by Still Grinning Kitchen!

WWW.BENZIECD.ORG