

# BENZIE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

annual report

# 2016

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



*Hazel Groves observes a damselfly at Nuts 4 Nature day camp*

 **BENZIE**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Chris Cota**  
*Board Chair*



**Roberta Dow**  
*Vice Chair*



**Bill Henning**  
*Treasurer*



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# STAFF



**Tad Peacock**  
*Executive Director*



**Ashley Garver**  
*District Intern*



**Aimé Merizon**  
*Outreach Coordinator  
& Office Manager*



**Katie Grzesiak**  
*Invasive Species  
Network Coordinator*



**John Ransom**  
*Conservation Specialist*



**Scott Hughey**  
*NRCS District Conservationist*



**Jessica Alpers**  
*MAEAP Technician*



**Kama Ross**  
*District Forester*

# A GREAT THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS, PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

Archangel Ancient Tree  
Archive  
Bayside Printing  
Steven Begin  
Benzie County Water  
Council  
Benzie Fishing Coalition  
Betsie River Clean Up Crew  
Boardman River Clean  
Sweep  
Max Bromley  
Central State Bank  
Cherryland Electric  
Chimney Corners Resort  
Emily Cook  
Crystal Lake & Watershed  
Association  
Stacy Daniels  
Sarah Delavan  
Roger & Helen Dewey  
DEQ  
DNR  
D'raupp Pottery  
Eastshore Market & Deli  
FieldCrafts, Inc.  
Norm Fred  
Friends of Betsie Bay  
Frankfort Tree Board  
Ashley Garver  
John Gerty  
Graceland Fruit, Inc.  
Grand Traverse Community  
Foundation  
Grand Traverse Regional  
Land Conservancy  
Grobbe Environmental  
Grow Benzie  
Joanne Hanson  
Bill & Ann Henning  
Ron & Jan Heverly  
Elizabeth & Phil Hill  
Honor Bank  
Ed Hoogterp  
Bob & Judy Kelly  
Greg Kindig  
Steve Kraft & Carol Burns  
Steve & Charmain Later  
L'Chayim  
Long Lake Association  
Lower Herring Lake  
Association  
Dave Long  
Milarch Bros.  
Ed McIntosh  
Still Grinning Kitchens  
Kayla Knoll  
David, Kim, Ava, Mya Main  
Jim McCormick  
Jodi Monteith  
Jane Perrino  
Plant It Wild  
Platte Lake Improvement  
Association  
Platte River Clean Up Crew  
Rick Pringle Memorial  
Fund Donors  
Tim Quist  
Ruthy Ransom  
Sue, Julian Ransom  
Riverside Canoes  
Robert & Denise Russell  
Dave Schaeffer  
Pat Scully  
Sleeping Bear Dunes  
National Lakeshore  
Jim Stamm  
Jim Stricko  
Will Swiecki  
Carolyn Thayer  
Upper Herring Lake  
Association  
West Michigan Bank &  
Trust  
Holland & Jane Wilde  
Gerald & Susan Wilgus  
Jeannie Williams  
Dustin Wolpoff  
Marlene Wood  
Dave Wynne



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



# DISTRICT NEWS: THE EVOLUTION OF EVOLUTION

“Go on, get out there!” my dad used to say when he’d find us kids languishing around the house and looking bored. And we did, and it was good. We’d climb trees, play baseball, ride bikes, chase each other around and generally see who could annoy the other siblings and/or neighbor kids the most. I am reminded to this day that I typically won that last contest. Still, it was good to be out.

So, what’s our innate connection to the outdoors? According to scientists, we’ve been evolving for oh, ten million years or so, give or take a few hundred thousand. Homo sapiens started using fire and cooking roughly a half million years ago and we got to appreciating a certain standard of comfortable existence in the past few thousand years (think shelter and clothing).

All throughout history, humans have had an inexorable connection to the natural world. This was, and still is, an existence in which we are an integral part of our surroundings, woven into the greater tapestry

as much as any gaggle of geese, forest of redwoods, or school of salmon. “Outside” is inside us all.

The state of human existence seems to be changing, however. I wonder if, because of technology, the process of human evolution is speeding up as never before. As wonderful and mind boggling as the technology train can be, is all this new-found knowledge and way of going about our daily lives diverting our attention away from a universal truth that binds living things together, namely the great outdoors? It’s not hard to imagine, for example, that in 500 years humans will live an existence that doesn’t much include the outside. Maybe outside won’t be inhabitable; or maybe technology will re-create the outside in the form of a virtual experience. Hard to know but here’s what we know now: Outside can be rejuvenating, serene, bold, brutal, incredibly awe-inspiring and even life-changing. And it can be a phenomenal place to feel human. So go on, get out there!

All the best,



Tad Peacock, Executive Director

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# INVASIVES *by Katie Grzesiak*

Another year of protecting, enhancing, and promoting northwest Michigan's natural communities through terrestrial invasive plant management and outreach in Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Manistee counties has come to a close. ISN workers and volunteers have been quite the busy bees!

In addition to continued funding through the first Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (MISGP) cycle, ISN was awarded additional financing through the EPA (Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, GLRI) and US Forest Service, as well as a second grant from MISGP. Together, these grants allowed ISN to focus on growing Go Beyond Beauty and target source populations of high-priority invasive plants in addition to continuing ISN's ongoing work.

The GLRI grant is focused on outreach and education, specifically highlighting ISN's groundbreaking Go Beyond Beauty program to voluntarily remove invasive ornamental plants from trade. We're already seeing success: since October 2015, two new businesses have joined the program. A survey crew was also funded, allowing ISN to look for invasives in a massive amount of the four counties' area.

The grants from MISGP and the US Forest Service combined allowed ISN to tackle: Japanese knotweed on roadsides, baby's breath near Elberta Beach, and the invasive Phragmites in Betsie Bay, Arcadia Marsh, and Manistee Lake. In 2016, ISN focused on obtaining permission to treat these species on public and private lands, with our first big push of treatments taking place in August, and continuing through the fall. In 2017, we'll be able to hit the ground running with treatments, and add restoration work (planting native plants in high-risk areas) to our to-do list.

In addition to these special projects, ISN's "normal" work continued. Outreach and education efforts in our four counties progressed, with numerous presentations,

workbees, workshops, and media interviews. A "check-out" crew targeted ISN's Top 20 Species for treatment, working side-by-side with partners and private landowners.

Our grant success has allowed us to bring two new members onto the ISN team: Fields Ratliff, our Habitat Management Specialist, and Miriam Owsley, our Outreach Assistant. We're excited to have Fields and Miriam, and all the expertise and enthusiasm they bring, on the ISN team.

If you have questions, want to get involved, or wish to schedule an engaging presentation to an interested group (school group, garden club, interest group, local government, or other) contact Katie Grzesiak at [kgrzesiak@gtcd.org](mailto:kgrzesiak@gtcd.org) or (231) 941-0960 x29 or visit [HabitatMatters.org](http://HabitatMatters.org).



*Volunteers clean up Tank Hill's wealth of garlic mustard.*



## ISN IN 2016:

- Surveyed over 1,600 acres of high-quality habitats for Top 20 invasive species & 197 mi road, 30 mi shoreline, and 60 mi river
- Treated over 600 acres of high-priority invasive species at over 250 sites
- Coordinated 12 workbees and 15 events
- Engaged 200+ volunteers for 500 volunteer hrs
- Contacted over 2,200 people directly and over 680,000 indirectly
- 41 presentations, 27 events, two partner meetings, social media, and press work
- Four early detection & response efforts: 1 mistaken giant hogweed, 1 true giant hogweed (treated), 1 true black jetbead, 1 mistaken hydrilla
- Dozens of responses to mistaken reports handled over the phone/email



# WATERWAYS *by John Ransom*

The health and protection of Benzie County's water resources remains a top priority for the Benzie Conservation District (BCD) in 2016. We have continued to partner with local watershed and lake associations to monitor water quality in all three of Benzie's major watersheds: Betsie/Crystal Lake, Platte, and Herring. In the last year the BCD provided 245.5 billable hours of technical assistance in water quality assessment, invasive plant treatments, and database management for local organizations. In 2016 we received two Michigan Clean Waters Corps grants to expand on our water protection efforts in the county. The first helped support our Platte and Betsie River clean ups. The other grant provided funding and equipment to start a stream flow assessment of Cold Creek and the Crystal Lake Outlet to help us better understand the movement of nutrients and sediment throughout the Crystal Lake watershed.

Projects such as our spring and fall macroinvertebrate surveys and the Platte and Betsie river clean ups have been successful due to the overwhelming support from local volunteers. In total we have had over 400 volunteer hours from 82 volunteers in support of water related projects and events in 2016. However, the most important way we uphold our mission to "preserve and enhance the natural resources of Benzie County" is through our educational programs. We have worked with local schools to talk to students about the importance of protecting our pristine waters in the county. This year we had over 350 contacts with students on topics from watershed stewardship, invasive species, ecosystem functions, and water quality. Through the continued support of Benzie County residents and the next generation of stewards the future of Benzie's waters will remain crystal clear!



*Photos: (clockwise from top left) Volunteers Ruthy & Julian, collect aquatic insects from a Herring Creek sample during the fall Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program; Volunteers work to measure stream flow on Cold Creek in Beulah. (Dave Wynne, Ed Hoogterp, Stacy Daniels); Platte River sixth graders observe a wayward duckling on a shoreline break during the Leave No Trace/Salmon in the Classroom canoe trip.*

# EDUCATION & OUTREACH

by Aimé Merizon

The year of 2016 was a great year for our events, activities, and outreach communications! We worked diligently in the winter months to create a new website that we hope you find easy to navigate and the information readily available. The new platform allows us to update the online store and add current posts for visitors in a much more timely manner.

In January, we hosted a microplastics forum; bringing together a panel of experts to share the facts and prompt a discussion on what's happening in our Great Lakes. A spin off from this is a new community group called Benzie Plastics Awareness Collective (BPAC).

We kicked off the spring with our Farms of Benzie farm tour and taste of maple syrup. This event is always popular as every new generation loves to learn about how sweet sap from trees transforms into the sticky liquid we pour on pancakes!

This May we offered a new program, the Spring Hike, presented by volunteer botanist, Judy Kelly. It was great fun and very informative. Springtime is also seedling sale time; this year we featured the American Chestnut.

Nuts 4 Nature, our environmental day camp, was once again held at Misty Acres and the Michigan Legacy Art Park. The camp was a great success with the 9- to 12-year olds, and their parents!

The summer flew by with water tours, workshops, folks calling and stopping in with questions and purchasing maps, guides, garden products, and seed. We served approximately 551 walk-ins, and 653 phone queries.

In the spring and fall, our environmental high school group, BCIA, "Benzie: Conserve, Inspire, Adapt" works to help bring awareness to other students and the community. President, Seamus Callaghan, won the Go Green Youth Challenge award for his poem, "The Slow Kingdom," based on the theme: "If trees were in charge..." The group also held an organic treats fundraiser, started a hugelkultur (raised bed made of rotting trees, branches, etc.) garden, and helped plant trees at the Archangel Ancient Tree Archive.

Other events included the Discovery Sail Schoolship Program on the Inland Seas schooner; and the Adopt-a-Beach Clean Up on Elberta Beach, held on International Beach Clean Up Day.



*Photos: (clockwise from top left) Seamus Callaghan, BCIA award winner; Elberta Beach Clean Up-Jameson Roethler shows her enthusiasm; volunteer extraordinaire, Jodi Monteith records her trash pickup data; Judy Kelly explains the flora on the Spring Hike; student steers the schooner on Lake Michigan; Greg Kindig skims foam off boiling maple sap.*





# FISCAL YEAR FINANCES 2015 - 2016

## REVENUE

Grants	\$56,200.00
Donations	\$4,982.00
Tree sales	\$11,293.00
Other sales & services	\$10,756.00
Tax revenue	\$115,434.00
Other revenue	\$2,335.00
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$201,000.00</b>

## EXPENSES

General operations	\$179,569.00
Cost of goods	\$7,635.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$187,204.00</b>

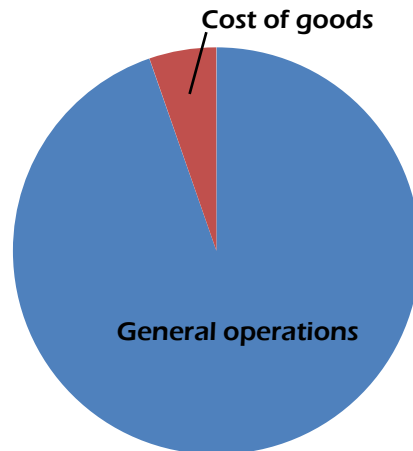
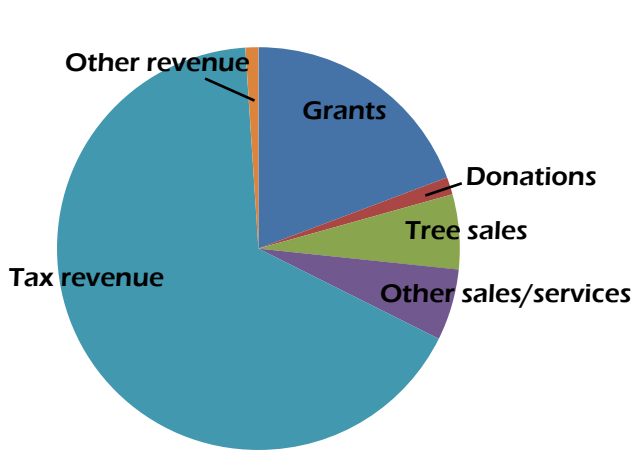
*\*Data above is for period October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016 and is unaudited.*

## REVENUE PERCENTAGES

Grants	28%
Donations	2.5%
Tree sales	6%
Other sales & services	6.5%
Tax revenue	56%
Other revenues	1%

## EXPENSE PERCENTAGES

General operations	96%
Cost of goods	4%



*All the programs, workshops, and services, including walk-ins and phone calls, provided by the BCD this year directly engaged approximately 2,000 members of our community!*

# NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE

by Scott Hughey

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 partner 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 Benzie County farmers and landowners to solve conservation resource concerns (problems) on their land. Below is a list of different conservation practices that NRCS assisted farmers and landowners in implementing in Benzie County during 2016:



- Cover Crops - 52.3 Acres
- Nutrient Management - 268.8 Acres
- Integrated Pest Management - 191.7 Acres
- Prescribed (Rotational) Grazing -23 Acres

NRCS assisted with 9 applications for Farm Bill Conservation Programs, funding 5 of those applications. Total dollar value of those funded applications is \$60,717.00 for 2016. These dollars will be used by landowners to offset the cost of implementing conservation practices on the landscape in Benzie County.

The 2014 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.

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 by email: [scott.hughey@mi.usda.gov](mailto:scott.hughey@mi.usda.gov).

## MAEAP NEWS

by Jessica Alpers

2016 was a year of new grower contacts and increased verifications for the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP).

In 2016, "Team MAEAP" facilitated 60 farm environmental risk assessments, the verification of 18 farms, and the re-verification of 10 farms in Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, and Leelanau Counties; bringing our total verifications to 173!

Benzie County alone had three new verifications: the Benzie Conservation District's Maley Property in the Forestry, Wetlands, and Habitat System and the Gray Farm in the Farmstead and Cropping Systems. 13 new environmental risk assessments were completed in Benzie County, far surpassing the goal of 7 risk assessments! Join along on our accomplishments throughout the year, by following us on Twitter: @Team\_MAEAP.



*Benzie Conservation District obtains MAEAP verification for the Maley property through the new forestry program. Forester, Stephen Begin, works with staff and board members to help manage the trees.*



# FORESTRY *by Kama Ross*

2016 proved to be another great year for the Forestry Assistance Program in Benzie County. Many county landowners have taken advantage of the property tax savings offered through the Qualified Forest Program. If you own 20 acres or more of forestland that is not your permanent residence, you can save substantially on your property taxes. The program is for landowners interested in active forest management and harvesting timber from your property.

Oak wilt is in Benzie County with a few new sites being confirmed through our Invasive Species Grant. One site in Almira Township adjacent to state land is being properly harvested with the safe wood going to Lake Ann Hardwoods. A 5' deep trench is being dug this fall to help control the underground spread. State cost-share is helping cover the expense of controlling the spread of this non-native disease on private land. If you suspect you have oak wilt, contact me for confirmation, treatment options and possible inclusion in cost-share opportunities.

As always, my role as District Forester is to help you make your forest work for you...whether it is enjoying the fall beauty, 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!



*District Forester, Kama Ross, explains the ins and outs of planting bareroot seedlings at the planting workshop.*

## FY2015-16 BENZIE COUNTY

- \* 395 office initial contacts, Benzie = 87
- \* 193 landowner site visits covering 4,526 acres, Benzie = 49/1,829 acres
- \* 659 landowner follow-up contacts, Benzie = 190
- \* 59 landowner referrals to consultant and industry foresters covering 2,111 acres, Benzie = 13/315 acres
- \* 9 landowner referrals to NRCS covering 448 acres, Benzie 2/44 acres
- \* 7 forest management plans to be written through referrals covering 637 acres, Benzie = 2/44 acres
- \* 43 landowner referrals for timber harvest covering 1,548 acres - 11/271 acres
- \* 30 outreach educational events reaching 967 area landowners (four in Benzie: forestry field day, chainsaw safety, planting and understory)
- \* 24 media occurrences (newsprint, web, radio, tv)



*The Chainsaw Workshop was well attended, and provided valuable information for landowners!*

### THINGS THAT MAKE YOU SAY: HMMMM...

A human breathes about 9.5 tonnes (a unit of weight in the metric system, equal to 1,000 kilograms) of air in a year, but oxygen only makes up about 23 percent of that air, by mass, and we only extract a little over a third of the oxygen from each breath. That works out to a total of about 740kg of oxygen per year. Which is, very roughly, seven or eight trees' worth.

# BENZIE CONSERVATION DISTRICT: 71ST ANNUAL MEETING

JOIN US FOR A  
VISUAL FEAST!

• THURSDAY,  
NOVEMBER 17, 2016

• 4:00 TO 6:00 PM

• STORMCLOUD BREWING CO.  
FRANKFORT

• CHARLES ST. CHARLES

• LIGHT REFRESHMENTS

• RSVP SUGGESTED:  
BENZIECD@BENZIECD.ORG  
OR CALL 231.882.4391

## GUEST SPEAKER: CHARLES ST. CHARLES

Award-winning nature photographer, and photography instructor Charles St. Charles has shared his work with hundreds of classrooms and boardrooms across the county. His art has been purchased and displayed in six continents. He tries to reach a number of goals through his photography; to make people more aware of the beauty all around them, to help people better understand the nature world, and to encourage people to be open and share what is most precious in the world.

Charles speaks candidly about the images in his catalog, *Nature of the Wild* ...

*These were made during the last year when I split my time between my home in Michigan and travels around the continent working on a North American Migrations project. It has been an incredible year. I witnessed everything from millions of Monarch Butterflies in Mexico, to pods of Humpback Whales in the Pacific, to a sky completely filled with cranes and snow geese in*

*Bosque Del Apache. I photographed endangered Green Turtles and dolphins in Hawaii, eagles Alaska, and loons in Michigan. I captured images of carpets of wildflowers that went on for a mile in the Mojave Desert and then I returned home to photograph carpets of Trilliums within miles of my home.*

*Whether I am home or on the road I find beauty all around me. And I feel honored to be able to share what I see with you. I hope that the fleeting moments that I captured will result in images that you enjoy for a lifetime.*

