



Western Lake Erie Basin *News* Healthy Land - Healthy Lake

June 2011

Congresswoman Kaptur Obtains Funds to Combat Emerald Ash Borer

By: Gregg Maxfield, Northern District Forest Manager, ODNR, Division of Forestry

Northwest Ohio has benefitted tremendously from grant dollars provided to the Ohio Division of Forestry through the USDA Forest Service and the hard work of Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur to deal with the impact of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) in the region.

Since the discovery of EAB in the Buckeye State in 2003, millions of ash trees in Northwest Ohio have been killed or are dying - creating a great potential for affected trees to fall or lose large limbs unexpectedly, creating a hazardous situation for communities and homeowners. Currently EAB has been found throughout Ohio and in many adjoining states.

In response to this public safety situation, grant dollars totaling \$3.25 million over a five-year period were provided by the efforts of Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur,

through the USDA Forest Service to support the Western Lake Erie Basin Emerald Ash Borer Community and Woodlands Assistance Program administered by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources - Division of Forestry.



Pictured: L to R: Gregg Maxfield, Marcy Kaptur, Don Rettig, Donna Lange, Walt Lange

WHERE WE WERE THEN AND WHERE WE ARE NOW!

- Approximately 3,900 ash trees have been removed from public right-of-ways in 35 communities within the WLEB with 1,700 of the trees having already been replaced!
- Over 150 private landowners owning more than 3,000 acres have obtained valuable management information on their woods from State foresters, particularly regarding EAB and Ash Management.
- The formation of a multi-agency committee to promote the utilization of wood products, particularly ash wood within the WLEB. This includes getting the most value from ash trees being removed in urban settings.
- Fulton and Seneca Soil & Water Conservation Districts in Northwest Ohio are working with private landowners to remove ash trees affected by EAB and replace them with native hardwood species capable to growing in the riparian zones.

For more information on Emerald Ash Borer, visit: <http://www.ohioagriculture.gov/eab>

Don't move wood - it bugs me!

NEWS YOU NEED TO NOTE

DePINTO RECEIVES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Joseph DePinto, a senior scientist at environmental consulting group Limno-Tech, Inc., in Ann Arbor, MI, was recognized for 35 years of work that has been the “backbone of decision-making for the Great Lakes ecosystem,” according to Robert Heath, President of the International Association of Great Lakes Research. Joe has worked with NRCS, the USACE and the WLEB partnership on modeling the Blanchard Watershed, as well as currently developing a whole lake model for the Western Lake Erie Basin.

Funds to restore Great Lakes available to farmers in Lake Erie Watershed

Farmers in the Western Lake Erie Basin have the chance to sign up for a special program to improve water quality in the Great Lakes. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will pay a portion of the cost of conservation practices that keep sediment and nutrients on the land and out of the Lake. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding will be available to Ohio farmers through existing NRCS conservation programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. Through these programs, landowners receive technical and financial assistance to implement conservation activities on their land that conserve soil, water, air, and wildlife resources. The deadline to sign-up for GLRI conservation programs is July 1. Contact a local NRCS office for more information.

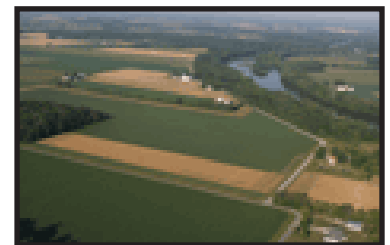
2011 Rivers Summit to be held in Fort Wayne, IN on June 28-29, 2011. This event, organized by twelve organizations and agencies, will bring together the public and local officials to share information about Indiana rivers and the possibilities that exist for interactions between them. Multiple speakers and break-out sessions along with an opportunity to obtain Continuing Educational Credits are available. For more information go to: <http://riversummit.org>

The **Lake Erie Commission** is accepting nominations for the *2011 Lake Erie Award*, which recognizes individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to enhance Ohio’s Great Lake. The nomination form is available online at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov>

Over 300 **RC&D offices** across the U.S. are now closed due to federal budget cuts. Every effort is being made to quickly determine where new locations will be and to re-establish business communications.

2011 Conservation In Action Tour will be taking place in Northwest Ohio on August 8 and 9. Join producers, ag advisors, conservation professionals, researchers, policy makers and government agency representatives for this unique event.

This event will feature farmers who make conservation a successful part of profitable operations, important discussions about how agriculture can address issues like increased nutrient levels in Lake Erie and contribute to critical water quality improvements; and new technology and tools for improving nutrient management on working lands.



August 8: Enjoy an evening socializing with a two-hour river cruise to learn more about the connection between agriculture, the Maumee River and Bay and Lake Erie.

August 9: A Conservation in Action Tour bus leaves the Crowne Plaza in Toledo at 7:30 a.m. to meet producers and partners implementing innovative conservation practices.

CCA CEUs are available. Sign up today and save. For more information visit: <http://ww.ctic.org> and click on *CIA Tours*

Stewardship on the Land - Featuring Michigan Farmer: Brent Moore

By: Lauren Lindemann, Conservation Specialist, Lenawee Conservation District

Along the county line between Lenawee and Hillsdale Counties of Michigan, sits a farm of approximately 3,000 acres. The establishment, Moore Farms, is owned and operated by Brent Moore. Brent has been farming for over 30 years. Since 1997 he has incorporated conservation and stewardship of the land into his plan of work.

Brent has installed grass planting on highly erodible Land, filter strips and WASCObS

Brent participates in many Farm Bill programs; one of such program being the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP is a State and Federal partnership providing environmental improvements for the Western Lake Erie Basin and River Raisin

Watershed. Brent voluntarily enrolls sensitive acres of agriculturally productive fields into practices under CREP to help solve resource concerns such as erosion. Numerous environmental benefits from CREP practices include decreasing erosion, controlling sediment loss, saving top soil and other nutrients. Practices also help filter chemical run-off, slow surface water flow, and allow increased infiltration through the ground. CREP also provides improved water quality and wildlife habitat.

By taking the land out of production and installing the proper practice to solve the resource concern Brent earns a rental payment on that acreage, as well as cost-share for installing the practice and other monetary incentives. Areas eligible for CREP include the Western Lake Erie Basin and River Raisin Watershed including parts of Branch, Hillsdale, Jackson, Washtenaw and Monroe Counties. All of Lenawee County is included in those watersheds. The cropland must have crop history of an annual row crop or be newly seeded to a legume four years between 2002 through 2007. The CREP contracts are for 15 years and a field visit must be done by the technician from the Conservation District.

Practices with CREP include native and introduced grass planting on highly erodible ground within 1000 feet of water, field windbreaks, filter strips, riparian forest buffers, Water and Sediment Retention Control Basin (WASCOB), and wetland restorations. Brent has installed grass planting on highly erodible land, filter strips and WASCOBs (he also is an advocate of waterways through Continuous Conservation Reserve Program).

A WASCOB is an earth embankment constructed across the slope to form a sediment trap and temporarily detain surface water. If properly placed, WASCOBs stop erosion, slow water flow enough to allow settling of sediment, and to allow water to enter into the tile system. WASCOBs in CREP also have a grass buffer component which acts as a filter strip and provides habitat for wildlife.

Fixing erosion was beyond Brent's own operation's ability. Having farm bill programs, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Conservation District, and Farm Service Agency (FSA) available for guidance and cost-share, made it easy for him to decide in having a role in conservation and doing what he could to protect

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Brent Moore standing by a water and sediment basin

Stewardship on the Land - Featuring Indiana Farmer: *Mike Werling*

By: *Jim Lake, District Support Specialist, Indiana &*

Audrey Wendling, St. Mary's River Watershed Project Manager, Indiana

As you pass the Werling Farm just south of the Allen-Adams, Indiana county line, a few things might catch your eye in the surrounding fields. Even in late April, there is still evidence of winter cover crops, including annual rye grass, blanketing the soil with a cover of green. Residue from the previous year's crop is thick and dispersed across the fields. A unique ditch on his farm with gradual sloping sides and a floodplain bench reconstructed to capture sediment and nutrients, called a two-stage, feeds into the nearby St. Mary's River, one of the major rivers in the Western Lake Erie Basin. These are just a few of the signs that a true conservation farmer lives here.

Mike Werling owns and operates the Werling Farm which currently consists of 350 acres in the St. Mary's Watershed. The farm has been passed down through generations. "The farm has been in the Werling name since my great-great grandfather moved here in 1847." Werling said.

Werling first started dabbling in conservation farming practices in the 1980s when he bought an International Harvester Conser-till chisel disc. His uncle and father, who he farmed with at the time, thought the chisel disc was a strange thing, but they began to change their minds when they saw the results of Werling's new type of tillage. "They saw a change in the soil, [it took] less work time, and from then on we kept leaving more residue on the surface," Werling said. Werling slowly worked his way up from minimum till to no-till and went to 100% no-till with corn, beans, and wheat in 2003. It was around this time that Werling began experimenting with different varieties of cover crops too, giving his soil even more added benefits.



Werling's rich farm soil

improvement, the energy bundle and cover crops. He said the EQIP assistance he is receiving helped him make the transition from toying around with the cover crops to always using them. Werling also received EQIP dollars in 2010 to install the two-stage ditch on his property.

Since implementing no-till and cover crops on his land, Werling has seen his yield increase staying competitive with those throughout the state of Indiana. He has also seen his costs for equipment, cost of fuel and cost of time spent decrease consistently. Though Werling always had a passion for conservation, the thing that really affected his decision to start using conservation practices was family. When his children were born, Werling decided he would quit his job in land surveying and civil engineering in town, so he could stay home with his kids and his wife Judy could keep working. He was looking for a way that he could farm full-time, but still have time to take care of the children at home. Changing the way he was farming seemed to be the best way to have more time with the family.

Werling's wife Judy said, "A long, long time ago he showed me an article that was called "Low Input Sustainable Agriculture" and he said "this is what I want to do." And that's what he did. I think he liked that he could decrease his inputs and be home more.

Werling's low input farming has also allowed him to be active on the local volunteer fire department, for which he is also a medical first responder. He uses his architectural engineering background to help on the building committee at his church and even has a part-time job at the Auditor's Office in Decatur, IN working with land transfers in Adams County.

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In 2010, he signed up for a 3-year contract through the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). In addition to continuing to do 100% no-till, the contract also includes pest and nutrient management plans, timber stand

Survey Reveals Conservation Tillage Practices in Lake Erie Drainage Area

By Steve Davis, Resources Conservationist, USDA/NRCS

A recently completed five-year study of conservation tillage practices in the 4.9 million acre Western Lake Erie Basin watershed reveals that most fields in the watersheds are either tilled conventionally or stirred with mulch tillage at least once every three to five years. Crop rotations including corn were the reason fields used conventional tillage periodically.

The amount of crop residue cover on the field at planting and the degree of soil stirring determines the type of conservation tillage. No-till planting, in which the crop is planted directly into the prior crop residue with a minimum of disturbance, leaves the most residue.

These findings are significant when considering the role conservation tillage plays in delivering phosphorous runoff to waterways in the Lake Erie drainage basin. Increasing levels of dissolved (soluble) phosphorous have been identified as a major factor in recent algal blooms. Some thinking points to no-till as a main culprit, alleging the phosphorous applied to no-till fields stays in the top layers of the soil which may run off easily.

The use of conservation tillage is critical to controlling sedimentation of waterways and Lake Erie. Uncertainty surrounding the increasing dissolved phosphorous runoff levels point out the need for substantial new and additional research to determine the exact forces driving the changes in phosphorous levels.

Farmers are not standing still. Using the technical and financial assistance from the NRCS and its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), over \$4.9 million have been applied to 462,262 acres since 1996 for nutrient management systems in the watershed that control phosphorous runoff. NRCS has given priority to incentives for nutrient management systems within the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative area. These systems use a variety of conservation practices, including no-till, cover crops, precision nutrient application, and controlled traffic, working together to reduce non-point runoff.

For more information on the results of this survey visit: <http://www.oh.nrcs.usda.gov/technical>

Find out information about your soil. Take the web soil survey today.

<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>

A banner for the USDA Web Soil Survey. It features the USDA logo on the left, a ruler in the center, and a grid of various soil samples on the right. The text "Web Soil Survey" is written in large, bold, yellow letters across the bottom right of the banner.

Continued - Stewardship on the Land - Featuring Michigan Farmer: Brent Moore

his land. Brent chose WASCObS because it is the most efficient way for controlling erosion and is cost-effective for his operation due to program assistance. Brent stated, "I was skeptic at first but now I believe in them, they do work."

Brent also participates in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Brent's crop rotation includes beans, wheat, and corn with cover crops, conservation tillage, and nutrient and pest management. It is estimated that with Brent's erosion control practices he is saving approximately 2,000 tons/acre of sediment a year and

with his conservation farming techniques he is saving approximately 9,000 tons/acre.

We all benefit from Brent's efforts and similar efforts by other farmers and landowners with agriculturally productive land that take steps to solve resource concerns. Brent recommends erosion control practices such as WASCObS to people. "The economics of agriculture is stressful because of margins; access to cost-share and the knowledge how to handle erosion impacting our operation." Brent's operation is family oriented; with him and one son as full-time workers and some seasonal help.

Continued - Stewardship on the Land - Featuring Indiana Farmer: Mike Werling

When talking about the importance of conservation programs, especially in relation to current conditions in Lake Erie, into which the St. Mary's River ultimately flow, Werling's belief in the ability for conservation practices/management to produce positive changes in whatever quality comes through.



Mike Werling

"Agriculture has a big impact and we can stop it. We can make a big difference. I've spent a lot of time playing on the St. Mary's River since I was little. We'd go fishing probably every day into the summer, so I've always been down there and I can see that it's a lot cleaner now, just with what we've done so far. The brown color and the mud is a lot less [than it used to be]. I know we're making a big difference, but we've got a long ways to go yet. In my mind the dissolved phosphorus is the part that we have to make a big difference on. You can keep the soil here, but you also have to keep the fertilizer here. I put all mine in the ground with the planter and haven't broadcast any fertilizer dry for 2-3 years. We can change. We can do it."

Reach Out Across the Western Lake Erie Basin

June 15 - Lake Erie Commission Meeting in Oak Harbor OH

Visit: www.lakeerie.ohio.gov

June 15 - Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Annual Meeting & Conference 2011 Visit: glslcities.org

July 17-21 - Coastal Zone 2011 in Chicago IL

Visit: <http://www.doi.gov/initiatives/cz11/index.htm>

August 9 - CTIC 2011 Tour will be held in Northwest Ohio and will focus on agriculture's influence on the environmental and economic health of Maumee River and Bay, as well as Lake Erie. The WLEB is a tour planning partner.

Get involved! Get more information in this Newsletter or

visit: <http://www.ctic.org/CIATours>

September 15 - Lake Erie Commission Meeting in Bay Village, OH

Visit: www.lakeerie.ohio.gov

October 12-13 - Great Lakes Biennial Meeting at Wayne State University

Visit: ijc.org

October 12-14 - Healing Our Waters - 7th Annual Great Lakes Restoration Conference, Detroit, MI Visit: <http://www.healthylakes.org>

Our next issue of the *Western Lake Erie Basin News* will be in early Fall. Highlights from our Fall issue will include an Ohio farmer. Farmers in the tri-state area are making a difference for the people and the land. If you need assistance with writing an article, please contact: kristingardner@ameritech.net or lindazmud@ameritech.net Phone: 419-245-2514

Mission Statement

The WLEB Partnership is a tri-state partnership dedicated to enhancing multi-purpose projects that improve land and water resource management in the basin and promote a healthy, productive watershed.

Partners

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, USDA
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Geological Survey, Ohio Water Science Center
Governor of Indiana
Governor of Michigan
Governor of Ohio
Indiana State Technical Committee
Michigan State Technical Committee
Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of SWCD
National Association of Conservation Districts
Maumee River Basin Partnership of Local Governments
Ohio State Technical Committee

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